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The End of a Mystery? A Study of the Blue Qur'ān's History

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If one had to name a Qur'ān manuscript that enjoys widespread fame, the Blue Qur'ān would undoubtedly be one of those that would immediately spring to mind, if not the one that would be the most widely acknowledged. The unique beauty of its pages, on which the golden script shines against the blue background of the parchment, has a power of suggestion that has inspired a novel[1] and a recent inscription in the city of Kairouan, where many of the folios are kept (fig. 5.1). Its reputation, however, does not mean that our knowledge of this unique copy is firmly established. Quite the contrary, the manuscript is shrouded in mystery: we do not have any of the data that could provide a more or less clear starting point for reconstructing its history, such as a colophon, with the date of completion, or a *waqf* deed that would provide a *terminus ante quem*. Researchers must therefore question the manuscript itself for clues to the date when it was made and the region in which it was produced. But they have tended to focus on one or another point, sometimes external to the copy, on the basis of which they have developed their arguments to put the Blue Qur'ān into its supposed context. As Jonathan Bloom writes, "we are all misguided when we allow our imagination free rein to project on this extraordinarily beautiful work of art whatever strikes our fancy."[2] One has to add that the history of the Blue Qur'ān may actually be, as I hope to demonstrate, quite disconcerting and that the mystery shrouding this manuscript could only stimulate the imagination.

While we have no direct information on the origins of the manuscript, we do have some data on its subsequent history, especially on the history of its discovery. The latter, which began at the beginning of the twentieth century, has undergone several twists and turns that have influenced the hypotheses put

1 S. Khemir, *The Blue manuscript*, London, 2009.
I am particularly indebted to Prof. Faouzi Mahfoudh and Dr. M. Rammah for their help in getting access to the collection and permission to use the materials I collected during my stays in Kairouan in April 2009 and December 2010. I also thank Ms. Asiyeh Ziai for her help in unravelling the mysteries of the Blue Qur'ān.

2 J. Bloom, The Blue Koran revisited, *Journal of Islamic Manuscripts* 6-2 and 3 (2015), p. 214.

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FIGURE 5.1 Kairouan. Modern monument, with a Qur'ānic inscription in gold on a blue background (Q 35:1–3) inspired by the Blue Qur'ān
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forward by the various researchers who have studied the manuscript. It is with a reminder of this history that it seems appropriate to begin this investigation of the Blue Qur'ān, before recalling its characteristics and attempting to identify the date and place where it was produced, before collecting some pieces of the puzzle relating to its subsequent history.

1 The 'Discovery' of the Manuscript

1.1 *Frederik Martin and the Connections with the East*

The manuscript entered the scene of Islamic art studies in 1912, when the first folios were brought to public attention in Quaritch's publication of Fredrik Martin's book *The miniature paintings and painters of Persia, India and Turkey*.[3] The Swedish traveler and diplomat had been in Constantinople between 1903 and 1908[4] and he most likely acquired a number of folios in the Ottoman capital city – though I cannot say how many of them passed through his hands.[5] In his book, he reported that the manuscript was commissioned by the caliph al-Maʾmūn (r. 198/813–218/833) for the tomb of his father Hārūn al-Rashīd (d. 170/786) in Mashhad.[6] Shortly before, in 1902, a folio, now in the Arthur M. Sackler Museum in Cambridge (Mass.), had received a stamp as it passed through Iranian customs.[7] Other folios were also acquired in an Oriental context: those in Dublin were purchased in Cairo in 1929,[8] and the one in the Denver Museum, which came from Rudolf Meyer-Riefstahl, an art historian and collector, probably came into his possession during one of his

3 I briefly recall the original data, without dwelling on the subsequent revisitations. A recent review of the researches has been made by J. Bloom (The Blue Koran revisited, pp. 196–218).

4 Fredrik Robert Martin (1868–1933): https://sok.riksarkivet.se/sbl/Presentation.aspx?id=9129 (accessed 7 October 2022). Between 1900 and 1902, he stayed in this city and in Turkey, but briefly. According to his biography, he never travelled to Iran, but was in Central Asia in 1894–1895.

5 The list of folios that belonged to him remains to be established. Seven of them passed into the hands of a London art dealer, who will be mentioned later, in 1979 (f. 1.1, 1.10, 1.15 and 16, 1.47 and 1.48, and most probably f. 1.50); all of them come from the first volume, and the same is probably true for the other three from the same source which I have not been able to identify. According to this source, two other owners had had these leaves before him: they could therefore, like F. Martin, have sold leaves that were in the folder between 1912 (?) and 1979.

6 F. Martin, *The miniature paintings and painters of Persia, India and Turkey*, London, 1912, pp. 106, 141, n. 83.

7 F. 1.18 r as proposed below; Cambridge (Mass.) Arthur M. Sackler Museum, 1967.23.

8 F. 1.4, 1.5 and 1.7; Dublin, CBL, Is 1405 A and B. According to the Chester Beatty Library website (https://viewer.cbl.ie/viewer/image/Is_1405A/1/), they were acquired from Aslan Sarkissian and not from F. Martin (J. Bloom, The Blue Koran revisited, p. 197).

trips to the Near East between the wars or during his stay in Istanbul between 1927 and 1929.[9] It is worth noting, although not as significant, that the folio in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, was acquired in 1931 in conjunction with the London exhibition of Persian art.[10]

1.2 *The Kairouan Inventory*

In 1956 Ibrahim Chabbouh published a medieval inventory of the library of the Great Mosque of Kairouan, dated 693/1294, which included a brief description of a blue parchment Qur'ān manuscript in seven volumes;[11] among the illustrations of his article, the author reproduced a folio of the Blue Qur'ān from the Kairouan collection, thus establishing a link between the inventory and the contents of the collection.[12] However, the text offered a difficulty: the blue manuscript it described apparently had only five lines to the page. In 1963, Muhammad al-Nayyāl published a small book on the Kairouan library.[13] He reproduced the first page of the inventory, where one could see several details that the Chabbouh edition had omitted or rendered unclearly.[14] First, one could see, as Tim Stanley would independently deduce,[15] that the upper right corner of the first folio had been torn away and that the first lines of the inventory were mutilated. Part of the description of the manuscript identified as the Blue Qur'ān was therefore missing. In fact, Chabbouh's edition led to the grouping together of two incomplete, but clearly distinct descriptions. Second, the Tunisian scholar did not take into account the remainder of two lines that could be distinguished at the very top of the folio. A date, still partly legible, presumably referred to an earlier inventory which the 693/1294 inventory

9 F. 1.19; Denver, Art Museum, BJ Averitt IAF 1999.78. See *In memoriam* Rudolf Meyer-Riefstahl, *Ars Islamica* 4 (1937), p. 499.

10 F. 1.32; Boston, Museum of Fine Arts, 33.686. See the museum website: https://collections.mfa.org/objects/17897.

11 I. Chabbouh, Sijill qadīm li-maktaba jāmiʿ al-Qayrawān, *Revue de l'Institut des manuscrits arabes* 2/2 (1376/1956), pp. 339–372. In the inventory, four copies of the Qur'ān (nos. 22, 24, 38 and 117), plus one that appears to be an assemblage of mismatched pieces (no. 69) are described as sets of 7 volumes, in addition to the Blue Qur'ān (F. Déroche, A note on the mediaeval inventory of the manuscripts kept in the Great Mosque of Kairouan, in *Writings and writing. Investigations in Islamic text and in honour of Dr Januarius Justus Witkam*, R. Kerr and Th. Milo eds., Cambridge, 2013, esp. p. 77): this is the third most frequent format, after the *juz'* (17 entries) and the 14-volume series (12), whose relationship with the 7-volume series is obvious.

12 *Ibid.*, pl. 3 (f. 5.17 r); I. Chabbouh proposed similar comparisons for other manuscripts.

13 M. al-Nayyāl, *al-Maktaba al-athariyya bi-l-Qayrawān: ʿarḍ wa-dalīl*, Tunis, 1963.

14 *Ibid.*, p. 13.

15 T. Stanley, *The Qur'an and calligraphy. A selection of fine manuscript material*, London (1996), p. 9.

quotes several times: the date, unfortunately mutilated, could in our opinion be [5]30/1135.[16] In addition, al-Nayyāl gave succinct indications about the Blue Qur'ān, a folio of which he also reproduced in his book: at the time he wrote it, 75 folios were still kept in Kairouan.[17] However, it took time before both publications were noticed by the scholarly community.

In 1976, the questions raised by the manuscript became apparent. That year, as part of the World of Islam Festival in London, two exhibitions were organised, each of which independently incorporated folios of the Blue Qur'ān borrowed from Tunisian institutions, the National Library on the one hand, and the National Institute of Art and Archaeology on the other: in one, the manuscript was attributed to the Abbasid Middle East,[18] in the other to Zirid Ifriqiya.[19] These differences, which will be explained later, were the source of sharply contrasting opinions.

2 Provisional Inventory of the Manuscript

The Blue Qur'ān represents an extreme case of the situation in which many early Islamic manuscripts exist today. With the exception of the National Museum of Islamic Art in Kairouan/Raqqāda, public or private collections generally possess only one folio of this copy, which was not the case initially since, as will be seen below, F. Martin had several in his possession. Nowadays, folios are scattered among slightly less than fifty collections and libraries around the world. The number of folios of which we are aware is probably slightly less than that of all those that actually survive: more than half of them passed through commercial channels where a trace of their passage was kept only when they were sold in an auction; when they were the subject of private transactions, they may have escaped our knowledge.

A significant part of the manuscript is in Tunisia, on the one hand in Kairouan where most of it is kept, either in the Raqqāda National Museum of Islamic Art

16 F. Déroche, A note on the mediaeval inventory, pp. 68–70.

17 M. al-Nayyāl, *al-Maktaba*, p. 19. Contrary to what is stated in the description of the fragment Dublin, CBL, Is 1405A, the National Library of Tunisia does not hold an intact volume of the manuscript.

18 *The Arts of Islam*, London, 1976, p. 316, n° 498: "Mesopotamia (? Baghdad), Abbasid period, 9th century." The text is "from Sura XXXIII," but it should be noted that the only known folio with a passage from s. 33 is f. 5.17, which was included in the British Library exhibition.

19 M. Lings and Y.H. Safadi, *The Qur'an*, London, 1976, p. 25, n° 11: "copied … probably in the early 4th/10th century in Kairouan." This item is bifolio *t* (f. 5.16–5.17, Q 31: 33–32: 10 and 33: 31–36).

(shelfmark R 197) or in the interpretation centre near the mosque, and on the other in the Bardo Museum in Tunis, a situation that has complicated my task. According to Alain George, 4 folios were on show in the museum,[20] but on a picture published by the Tunisian Ministry of Tourism on the occasion of the reopening of the room devoted to Kairouan, one can see two display cases with three isolated folios of the Blue Qur'ān and an open bifolio, which makes a total of 5 folios.[21] The picture does not allow for more than a partial identification, but the passages concerned were finally communicated to me.[22] In 2009 and 2010, I was able to see part of the Blue Qur'ān in Kairouan, some of its folios remaining inaccessible to me – not least because they were in the exhibition.[23] According to the recent inventory, 65 folios were preserved, but the pictures which were made available to me in order to complete the description of the manuscript reproduced only 62 of them – and I do not know if since my visit any of them have been exchanged between the Raqqāda and Bardo museums.

It is more difficult to account for the folios that have circulated on the market, whether or not they are part of private collections, not least because we often know only one side. I have identified 60 of them, and these data, incomplete as they are, have been integrated into the description of the contents that follows.[24] How to designate the folios? Until now, references have been made to the name of the collection or to exhibition and sales catalogues; as some folios sold at auction have changed hands several times, this method has shown its limitations – and the distinction between the recto and verso is almost never made. Continuous numbering would undoubtedly be easier to use, but it would require a complete knowledge of all the surviving Blue Qur'ān folios, which is not currently possible. On the other hand, the manuscript, whatever its initial state, was in the shape of a series of seven volumes according to the oldest testimony we have, that of the medieval inventory of Kairouan. It therefore seems more in keeping with this reality to number the folios of each volume separately, with a first digit from 1 to 7 corresponding to the volume: f. 2.4 means folio 4 in volume 2 and f. 4.19 means folio 19 in volume

20 A. George, Calligraphy, colour and light in the Blue Qur'an, *Journal of Qur'anic Studies* 11-1 (2009), p. 111.

21 https://www.tunisiatourism.info/en/articles/musee-du-bardo-reouverture-de-la-salle-de-kairouan (last accessed 7 October 2022).

22 I thank Prof. Kh. Kchir for his invaluable help in completing this information.

23 I thank Dr. M. Rammah for his invaluable help in giving me access to the manuscript.

24 In preparing it, I have used the very useful list published by A. George (Calligraphy, colour and light, pp. 110–111) as well as the supplement provided by M. Fraser (The origins and modifications of the Blue Qur'an, in *Manuscripts in the making. Art & Science*, S. Panayotova and P. Ricciardi eds., London-Turnhout, 2017, p. 210, n. 2).

4. In this way, previously unknown folios may surface without resulting in disruptions to the whole. It will be easy to introduce "bis" or "ter" to integrate in the sequence the folios that would appear later, until all are known. In the summary that follows (and in Appendix 1), an asterisk indicates folios of which only one side is known to me, which affects the description. It is clear, I insist, that other folios may appear later and that this numbering is therefore not a final one.[25]

Volume 1 (50 f.): **2:** 20–30 (2 f.= 1 and 2*), 33–42 (1 f.= 3*), 60–81 (3 f.= 4, 5 and 6), 93–101 (1 f.= 7), 105–113 (1 f.= 8), 120–127 (1 f.= 9), 148–155 (1 f.= 10), 164–171 (1 f.= 11), 178–206 (5 f.= 12*, 13*, 14, 15* and 16*), 218–221 (1 f.= 17*), 229–241 (3 f.= 18, 19* and 20*), 253–273 (4 f.= 21, 22, 23 and 24*), 281–286 (2 f.= 25*and 26*); **3:** 1–9 (1 f.= 27*), 17–64 (6 f.= 28*, 29*, 30*, 31, 32 and 33), 79–82 (1 f.= 34*), 91–96 (1 f.= 35*), 127–137 (1 f.= 36), 157–**4:** 2 (6 f.= 37*, 38*, 39, 40*, 41* and 42); **4:** 8–25 (4 f.= 43, 44, 45* and 46), 37–62 (4 f.= 47*, 48*, 49 and 50*);

Volume 2 (6 f.): **5:** 68–85 (2 f.= 1 and 2); **6:** 19–29 (1 f.= 3), 48–57 (1 f.= 4); **7:** 130–145 (2 f.= 5 and 6);

Volume 3 (10 f.): **9:** 49–59 (1 f.= 1); **11:** 47–55 (1 f.= 2); **12:** 13–21 (1 f.= 3), 108–13: 10 (2 f.= 4 and 5); **13:** 16–37 (3 f.= 6–8); **14:** 44–52 (1 f.= 9*); **15:** 1–22 (1 f.= 10*);

Volume 4 (25 f.): **16:** 37–77 (4 f.= 1, 2, 3 and 4); **17:** 12–31 (2 f.= 5 and 6), 101–111 (1 f.= 7); **18:** 1–107 (10 f.= 8*, 9 to 17); **19:** 26–**20:** 22 (6 f.= 18, 19, 20, 21, 22 and 23); **20:** 61–73 (1 f.= 24); **22:** 71–78 (1 f.= 25);

Volume 5 (17 f.): **25:** 48–60 (1 f.= 1*); **26:** 52–78 (1 f.= 2), 180–202 (1 f.= 3); **27:** 34–42 (1 f.= 4); **28:** 72–86 (2 f.= 5 and 6); **29:** 9–26 (2 f.= 7 and 8*), 34–56 (3 f.= 9, 10 and 11*); **30:** 24–58 (4 f.= 12, 13*, 14* and 15); **31:** 33–32 : 10 (1 f.= 16); **33:** 31–36 (1 f.= 17);

Volume 6 (10 f.): **34:** 48–35: 4 (1 f.= 1); **36:** 74–**37:** 8 (1 f.= 2); **38:** 22–28 (1 f.= 3); **41:** 31–43 (1 f.= 4); **42:** 13–23 (2 f.= 5* and 6*);[26] **43:** 48–**44:** 35 (4 f.= 7, 8, 9 and 10);

25 I do not indicate the place of conservation of each folio; the reader will find that information in Appendix 1 with the list of folios. In the description, the folio numbers with an asterisk (e.g., f. 5.11*) indicate that the text present on that folio could not be checked.

26 The caption of the illustration provided by Y. Tabbaa is incorrect: it shows Q 42: 16–21 (Y. Tabbaa, *The transformation of Islamic art during the Sunni revival*, Seattle, 2001, p. 51, fig. 17); the passage on the verso may be Q 42: 21–23.

Volume 7 (6 f.): **49:** 10–15 (1 f.= 1); **52:** 32–**53:** 27 (2 f.= 2 and 3); **55:** 18–41 (1 f.= 4); **57:** 13–20 (1 f.= 5); **72:** 6–[19] (1 f.= 6).[27]

Combining the information gathered over the years by those who have been investigating the manuscript with that available to me, I have identified a total of 124 folios. 6 folios could be added to them:

1) probably 3 folios which represent the difference between the data of the modern inventory of Kairouan and the 62 folios of which I have a picture;
2) possibly 3 other folios which are part of a set of 10 folios mentioned in a document discussed below. I think I have identified 7 of them; the other three are therefore in principle absent from the above list, but their owner(s), whom I have not been able to identify, may have disposed of them at a public sale and, in this case, the folio is recorded above.

To sum up, I have therefore left out, for lack of information on their contents, up to 6 folios of which we have a more or less clear trace; to these can be added those which circulate without having been reported. As J. Bloom noted, almost all the folios that have been reported in commercial transactions originate from the first seventh of the Qur'ān text, which in principle ends at the end of Q. 4: 60.[28] Only 10 in public or private collections are from other parts of the manuscript.[29]

According to the data available to me, 24 bifolios (numbered from "a" to "x") have been preserved. Their distribution is very uneven; according to the information available, 4 of them are among the folios that belong to the first seventh (*a*, f. 1.15 and 1.16; *b*, f. 1.21 and 1.22; *c*, f. 1.39 and 1.42; *d*, f. 1.47 and 1.48), as opposed to 20 in those that correspond to the rest of the Qur'ān (*e*, f. 2.3 and 2.4; *f*, f. 3.4 and 3.8; *g*, f. 3.5 and 3.7; *h*, f. 3.9 and 3.10; *i*, f. 4.1 and 4.4; *j*, f. 4.8 and 4.16; *k*, f. 4.10 and 4.15; *l*, f. 4.11 and 4.14; *m*, f. 4.12 and 4.13; *n*, f. 4.18 and 4.19; *o*, f. 4.22 and 4.23; *p*, f. 5.1 and 5.2; *q*, f. 5.3 and 5.4; *r*, f. 5.5 and 5.10; *s*, f. 5.6 and 5.9; *t*, f. 5.16 and 5.17; *u*, f. 6.7 and 6.8; *v*, f. 6.9 and 6.10; *w*, f. 7.2 and 7.3; *x*, f. 7.4 and 7.5). This state of affairs makes it difficult to determine the type of quire that makes up the manuscript: the sequence of bifolios on f. 4.9 to 4.16 (Q. 18: 14–94) shows that they were at least quaternions. If f. 4.8 and f. 4.17, which are textually continuous with those just mentioned, were once joined and thus formed the outer bifolio of this gathering, then they would be quinions: this seems

27 The lower part of the folio with the last three lines has disappeared. In addition, very small fragments where it is difficult to identify the text are also present in Kairouan/Raqqāda.

28 J. Bloom, The Blue Koran revisited, p. 205.

29 The folio from the Tareq Rajab Museum has not been taken into account: it is a forgery, the content (Q 18: 82–90) overlapping that of Kairouan, f. 4.1, with Q 18: 81–94.

actually quite likely. None of the folios show any trace of a stub, a practice that is quite common in the construction of parchment gatherings in Qur'ān manuscripts in Abbasid times.[30] A curious situation exists at the level of the two bifolios "u" and "v": both constitute what is in principle the centre of a quire, the text being continuous between the first (f. 6.7 v and 6.9 v) and second folios of each (f. 6.8 r and 6.10 r respectively), but it is also continuous between the bifolios "u" (f. 6.8 v) and "v" (f. 6.9 r). These two singulions may be the result of a copyist's error or an accident in the production of the manuscript which would imply work on free bifolios. The identification of the flesh and hair sides of the folios seems impossible.[31]

3 Physical Characteristics

3.1 *Initial State*

3.1.1 The Support

The manuscript was copied on parchment dyed with indigo. In the Middle Ages, different varieties of the plant were cultivated and processed in several regions of the Muslim world: Yemen, Egypt, Syria, Tunisia and Morocco.[32] Baghdad may not have been an area where the plant was grown, but it was a transit point for indigo from India, the quality of which was apparently highly valued in Europe – so much so that in various places "Baghdad indigo" was considered the best.[33] It was very commonly used to dye textiles, and the techniques used in this context were well mastered. But what about parchment? How were the folios of the Blue Qur'ān dyed? Two answers to this question have been proposed: according to the first, the colour was applied either by rubbing the parchment with a stick of dye[34] or by applying it with a brush or cloth.[35] For the other, the parchment was dipped into a dye bath;[36] indeed, a product commonly used in the dyeing process was identified.[37] In an article on Carolingian manuscripts, another method is suggested by the authors who,

30 F. Déroche *et al.*, *Manuel de codicologie des manuscrits en écriture arabe*, Paris, 2000, pp. 84–86.

31 See also Ch. Porter, The materiality of the Blue Quran: a physical and technological study, in *The Aghlabids and their neighbors: Art and material culture in ninth-century North Africa*, G.D. Anderson *et al.* eds., Leiden-Boston, 2017, p. 580.

32 J. Balfour-Paul, *Indigo in the Arab world*, Richmond, Surrey, 1997, pp. 14 and 19–20.

33 *Ibid.*, pp. 22–23.

34 J. Bloom, The Blue Koran revisited, p. 209.

35 Ch. Porter, The materiality, pp. 577–578.

36 A. George, Calligraphy, colour and light, pp. 76–77; Ch. Porter, The materiality, pp. 580–581.

37 A. George, Calligraphy, colour and light, p. 76.

after having considered the use of a brush on the one hand and immersion in a dye bath on the other ("brushing and soaking"), had obtained experimental results that were not satisfactory. They therefore examined the so-called "press method," previously identified in the case of Ms 004 from Abbeville, the *Gospels of Saint-Riquier* (dated 780–800 CE), which consists of "placing a sheet of parchment between two pieces of cloth impregnated with this colour [=purple] and putting it under press."[38] The parchment of the Blue Qur'ān shows no traces of the fibres of a cloth left in the printing process, but this may be due to the use of another material to transfer the dye. It would be interesting to observe whether this technique produced the "fine crystals of blue colour" observed on one of the Chester Beatty Library's folios or a "particulate" surface.[39]

The folios of the manuscript measure approximately 310 × 400 mm. Other copies of the Qur'ān in the same style of writing have dimensions not far removed from those of the Blue Qur'ān: two specimens that form part of ms Paris, BnF Arabe 334 (fragments f and g), both of which come from Fusṭāṭ and measure 283 × 370 mm and 293 × 387 mm respectively.[40] The manuscript Istanbul, Nuruosmaniye 27 is slightly smaller, at 275 × 368 mm. In the Kairouan collection there is a composite manuscript with folios in D IV script that are larger (430 × 560 mm).[41] In the Fusṭāṭ collection, as known from the 240 or so fragments preserved in Paris, style D IV is present on ten fragments, one of which is vertical (Paris, BnF Arabe 336).[42] In Kairouan, on the other hand, of the almost 250 oblong manuscripts that I have been able to identify, only five are in this type of writing, including the Blue Qur'ān. None of them is in vertical format.

38 Ch. Denoël, P. Roger Puyo, A.-M. Brunet and N. Poulain Siloe, Illuminating the Carolingian era: new discoveries as a result of scientific analyses, *Heritage Science* (2018), p. 9/19 (https://heritagesciencejournal.springeropen.com/track/pdf/10.1186/s40494-018-0194-1.pdf).

39 A. George, Calligraphy, colour and light, p. 76.

40 F. Déroche, *Les manuscrits du Coran : Aux origines de la calligraphie coranique*, Bibliothèque Nationale, Catalogue des manuscrits arabes, 2e partie, Manuscrits musulmans, 1/1, Paris, 1983, p. 108. J. Bloom's remarks about the size of the manuscript must therefore be qualified, especially as his information relies only on the data from the catalogue of the Khalili collection (J. Bloom, The Blue Koran revisited, p. 207 and n. 38). As is well known, most of the fragments in the Bibliothèque nationale de France collection originate from the 'Amr mosque in Fusṭāṭ.

41 For the script, see below.

42 F. Déroche, *Les manuscrits du Coran*, pp. 108–110. The manuscripts Paris, BnF, Arabe 5124, 5178 b and 6002 a (*ibid.*, pp. 110–111) have different origins.

3.1.2 Writing and Ruling

The folios are covered with 15 lines of gold script which belongs to group D IV in the typology of scripts from this period that I have proposed[43] and which may have been produced by different copyists,[44] as the process of applying the gilding for the body of the letters and then outlining them with ink requires more time than writing in black ink alone.[45] The Blue Qur'ān illustrates, along with the fragments Toronto, Aga Khan Museum, AKM478,[46] Kairouan, National Museum of Islamic Art R 57a and the Istanbul fragment, Nuruosmaniye, 27,[47] the use of chrysography by copies of the Qur'ān in D IV style. Analysis suggests that gold was applied in leaf form.[48] One of the characteristics of the writing of the Blue Qur'ān is the elongation (*mashq*) of the various letters that lend themselves to it, such as the *dāl*, the *ṣād* or the *kāf* (fig. 5.2, for instance). On the other hand, the copyists rarely use a technique that was common at the time, the filler dashes at the end of the line: we find them, for example, in f. 2.2 v, 4.13 r or 5.17 r (fig. 5.2).[49] Diacritics are rare and short vowel signs (red dots would be expected in that case) are absent.

The longest textual sequence in the manuscript, which amounts to 10 folios on f. 4.8–4.17 (Q. 18: 1–107), was used as a starting point for estimating the original total number of folios in the Blue Qur'ān. Other shorter sequences (f. 1.21–27, 7 f.: Q. 2: 253–3: 9; f. 4.18–24, 7 f.: Q. 19: 26–20: 22) supplemented the first result and made it possible to make an initial assumption that the manuscript originally contained about 540 folios – a folio containing on average about 18 lines of the 1924 edition. On the basis of the best-preserved seventh, the first, an assessment of the gaps between the folios known to us allows us to estimate that about 30 folios are missing, which would mean that it originally contained 80 folios; this second hypothesis would establish the total number of folios at

43 F. Déroche, *Les manuscrits du Coran*, pp. 35–47; id., *The Abbasid tradition, Qur'âns of the 8th to the 10th centuries*, The Nasser D. Khalili collection of Islamic art, 1, London, 1992, pp. 34–47.

44 I will not address this point in the context of this study.

45 J. Bloom describes the ink as 'dark brown' (The Blue Koran revisited, p. 211 and fig. 4), but Fraser believes it was red (The origins, p. 205).

46 *Chefs d'œuvre islamiques de l'Aga Khan Museum*, S. Makariou ed., Paris-Milan, 2007, pp. 110–111.

47 See for instance M. Lings, *The Quranic art of calligraphy and illumination*, London, 1976, pl. 3 and 4.

48 Ch. Porter, The materiality, pp. 582–584.

49 Compare, for example, with the fragment in D IV style Paris, BnF Arabic 337 e, f. 86 r, l. 2, 4, 5, etc. (https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b8415212s/f169.item.r=%22arabe%20337%22).

FIGURE 5.2 Ms Kairouan/Raqqāda, National Museum of Islamic Art, R 197 (Blue Qur'ān), f. 5.17 r. Q. 33: 31–34. Script, with examples of *mashq* and end of line fillings (l. 10). Diacritical punctuation of *fā'* (l. 4). Traces of the original division of the verses (1.1.1) below the silver rosettes (3.1.3) at the end of l. 2
© INP/RAQQĀDA, NMIA

560.[50] One should note that this hypothesis could take into account, better than the first one, the variability introduced by the irregular use of the *mashq* by the copyist(s). This means that almost a quarter of the manuscript has been preserved. This evaluation does not take into account possible extra folios for the initial and final illuminations: it should be noted that Nuruosmaniye 27,

50 J. Bloom estimated a total of 600 folios (J. Bloom, The Blue Koran revisited, p. 206). According to my own estimates, the production of the Blue Qur'ān required a surface of parchment ranging from of ca. 67 to ca. 70 sq.m., figures that are quite close to those obtained by using J. Bloom's hypothesis (74 sq.m.). Among the Kairouan Qur'ān manuscripts, these figures can be compared with the Umm Malāl Qur'ān, whose leaves have roughly the same dimensions as the Blue Qur'ān (274 × 363 mm) but which represented a parchment surface of 2,400 sq.m., and the modest Fadl Qur'ān (105 × 160 mm), which required only 56 sq.m. (F. Déroche, Format et coût des livres. Les manuscrits coraniques sur parchemin et les enseignements de la collection de Kairouan, in *Zwischen Sanaa und Saarbrücken. Hans-Caspar Graf von Bothmer zum 70. Geburtstag*, A. Merl, G.-R. Puin and O. Siebisch eds., Saarbrücken, 2012, p. 22).

which is close to the Blue Qur'ān in many respects, has retained its three double pages of final illuminated frames, which means that they were probably six originally.[51] If the beginning and end of the Blue Qur'ān were also highlighted by illuminated sequences, the initial number of its folios could be marginally increased. To date, however, no such decoration has been reported.

Traces of hard point ruling are visible (fig. 5.5). On some folios, e.g., f. 3.1, 4.1 and 7.1, the lines for writing extend beyond the frame, whereas elsewhere they do not. F. 3.1 belongs to the third seventh, f. 4.1 to the fourth and f. 7.1 to the seventh. These variations in the ruling grid may be related to changes of copyist during the process of production, each of them having his own way of ruling. On f. 3.4 and f. 3.8, stitches can be seen close to the inner edge of the folio: they do not appear to be related to the ruling, but may be a rudimentary sewing system aimed to hold folios together at a time when the cohesion of the volume was compromised.

3.1.3 Separations between Verses and Groups of Verses

The verses are separated by groups of three or four oblique gold dashes (1.1.1).[52] These are sometimes also used to fill a gap, for example at the end of a sura, as can be seen on f. 5.16 r, l. 2, before the decoration of the sura. The groups of ten are marked by simple roundels (1.A.1), in which a letter with a numerical value according to the *abjad* system has been drawn on a coloured background dominated by red (figs. 5.5 and 5.6). As J. Bloom had noticed, the letter *ṣād* is placed in the decorations indicating the end of verse 60 (see f. 1.33 v, 4.2 v, 5.2 r or 6.7 v, for example): this value is traditionally associated with the system that was in use in the Western part of the Islamic world and differs from that of the East, where the letter *sīn* is equivalent to 60.[53]

The use of *abjad* numerals at the end of each tenth verse is well attested for manuscripts of type D IV: examples appear in the fragments of Fusṭāṭ (Paris, BnF Arabe 334 f and g, 337 e and f, 349 b and 354 a) and Damascus (Berlin, Staatsbibliothek, We 1921, 1922, 1923 and 1937).[54] However, this is not specific to D IV: manuscripts copied in style B II such as BnF Arabe 340 d, f and i or

51 See M. Ülker, *Başlangıçtan günümüze Türk hat sanatı*, Ankara, 1987, pp. 105–107.

52 I refer to the typology that the reader will find in F. Déroche, *Les manuscrits du Coran*, pp. 27–31, or *The Abbasid tradition*, p. 21.

53 G.S. Colin, art. "abd̲jad," *EI*[2] t. 1, p. 100; F. Déroche *et al.*, *Manuel*, p. 104.

54 Most of the fragments in Berlin and Tübingen were bought from Wetzstein, who acquired them in Damascus (see F. Déroche, The Quranic collections acquired by Wetzstein, in *Manuscripts, politics and Oriental studies. Life and collections of Johann Gottfried Wetzstein (1815–1905) in context*, B. Liebrenz and Chr. Rauch eds., Leiden-Boston, 2019, pp. 92–115). In what follows, they will be alluded to, for brevity's sake, as fragments from Damascus.

349 f,[55] but also in type D I, such as BnF Arabe 339, 346 a, 352 c and e, 354 b and e, 361 e and 366 f,[56] are proof of this. It should be noted, however, that the proportion is not the same and that the D III style copies from Fusṭāṭ apparently do not use this system and that D Va has only one example of this, BnF Arabe 325 f.[57] It is therefore possible that an evolution has taken place, either regionally or more likely chronologically, which has seen a less frequent use of this type of numerals in favour of the tens written in full, whether by repeating "ten" (*ʿashr*) for each tenth verse, or by employing the corresponding cardinal adjective.[58] As for the use of the letter *ṣād* with the value of sixty in the *abjad* system, an examination of the Fusṭāṭ manuscripts shows that this practice is usual in the third/ninth century and in manuscripts in different styles of script: D IV, of course (Bnf Arabe 334 f, f. 64 v; 337 f, f. 90 v; 340 e, f. 72 v),[59] but also B II (BnF Arabe 349 f, f. 120 v, 127 v)[60] or D I (BnF Arabe 339, f. 15 r).[61] The same observation could be made about the Damascus manuscripts.

The suras are separated by anepigraphic bands of the height of the lower letters and formed by the repetition of the same element – a segment or a scroll.[62] To date, eight sura illuminations are known. Those of s. 4 (f. 1.42 v; fig. 5.3), 20 (f. 4.22 v, mutilated) and 35 (f. 6.1 v) consist of a golden wavy stem whose sinuosities, underlined by ink fillets, delimit spaces filled with coloured

55 F. Déroche, *Les manuscrits du Coran*, p. 73.

56 F. Déroche, *Les manuscrits du Coran*, pp. 85, 86, 89, 90, 92 and 93 respectively.

57 F. Déroche, *Les manuscrits du Coran*, p. 112.

58 A. George discussed already the chronology of the *ṣād/sīn* use in *abjad* (Calligraphy, colour and light, pp. 92–3).

59 See https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b52508882b/f138.item.r=%22arabe%20334%22; https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b84152125/f178.item.r=%22Arabe%20337%22; https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b84152136/f150.item.r=%22Arabe%20340%22 (last accessed 6 October 2022).

60 See https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b8415220b/f240.item.r=Arabe%20349 (last accessed 6 October 2022).

61 See https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b85775145/f33.item.r=%22Arabe%20339%22 (last accessed 6 October 2022).

62 As the title of the sura is not indicated in the original presentation of the manuscript, it is not possible to determine whether the anepigraphic headbands were meant to be a decoration of the beginning or the end of the sura: in ancient times, the use of an introductory formula – either with the word *fātiḥa* ("beginning") or with *khātima* ("end") – shows that both ways coexisted (see, e.g., F. Déroche, *Les manuscrits du Coran*, p. 31). In D IV group, apart from the manuscripts where only the title and possibly the number of verses are indicated, according to the usage that became established later, *fātiḥa* ... is also in use (see *ibid.*, p. 110; also the fragments Berlin, SB, We 1923 and 1943; Cambridge, UL, Add. 1123). In what follows, I have chosen to consider that the headbands marked the beginning of the sura in order to simplify the references, but this does not mean that those who conceived the manuscript intended them in this way.

dots and golden motifs. S. 13 (f. 3.4 v) is preceded by a headband which fills the end of the last line of s. 12 with a series of recumbent S's, enhanced by red dots and separated from each other by a lozenge with concave sides. The headbands for s. 32 (f. 5.16 r) and 53 (f. 7.2 v) are punctuated by circular shapes, between which are interspersed segments with decoration organised according to a horizontal (s. 32) or oblique (s. 53) line. Before s. 37 (f. 6.2 v), circular arcs – almost always incomplete – delimit compartments separated by approximately triangular spaces: the former are occupied by an alpha-shaped motif with a loop at the top.[63] Finally, the illumination of s. 44 (f. 6.9 v) consists of a gilded scroll that stands out against the blue background, with each loop ending in a three-lobed motif. An eighth sura headband, corresponding to s. 3, has been scratched out, as has the text of the first verses of the sura.[64]

Often a vignette placed within the outer margin is connected with the headband. There is no vignette with s. 13 headband (f. 3.4 v) because it occupies the part of the line left empty after the last word of s. 12, on l. 3 – the text of s. 13 begins on the next line; the headband is therefore separated from the gutter margin by the text. The case of s. 20 (f. 4.22 v) is different: the folio is mutilated and the vignette, if it existed, has disappeared. The others are very homogeneous: they usually take the shape of a shrub made up of symmetrically organised scrolls; the vignettes in s. 4 (f. 1.42 v; fig. 5.3) and 53 (f. 7.2 v), whose branches are growing freely, are a slight exception, but the inspiration remains identical. However, the technique is the same in all cases: a gold fillet applied with a brush on the parchment, with flat areas for the leaves, without outlining with black or reddish black ink as is the case for the letters of the text. In three cases (s. 35, 37 and 44), an axial stem organises the scrolls, which bear three-lobed leaves, highlighted with red or green dots, similar to those of the headband for s. 44 (f. 6.9 v); its summit termination is composed of five leaves. The vignette for s. 32 (f. 5.16 r) keeps the symmetrical organisation although there is no axial stem and the tip's end has the shape of a pomegranate. These somewhat elaborate decorations show the great homogeneity of the illumination throughout the manuscript: they are found in each of the seven volumes of the series, with the exception of the second. The sixth volume is the best represented with three headbands and vignettes. It should be noted, however, that all of them remain relatively modest in appearance.

63 Compare with the anepigraphic decoration of a sura decoration on a B II style folio reproduced by A. George (Calligraphy, colour and light, fig. 5).

64 M. Fraser, The origins, pp. 204–205, with reference in n. 33 to Christie's, 26 April 1994, lot 33 and Sotheby's, 29 April 1998, lot 4.

FIGURE 5.3 Coll. Hamid Jafar, f. 1.42 v. Q. 3: 199–4: 2
COURTESY OF THE HAMID JAFAR COLLECTION

3.1.4 The Problem of Full-Page Illumination

According to the text of the 693/1294 inventory of Kairouan Great Mosque's library mentioned above, the blue parchment manuscript is described as a copy in seven volumes. Only one folio has been preserved on which one of the points of the text concerned by this division appears (f. 1.50 r): it is the end of the first seventh.[65] On the verso there is a full-page illumination. As far as I know, the case is unique among early manuscripts: the copyist did not stop at the end of the final verse of this part, Q. 4: 61, but continued on the last line of the recto the transcription of the first word of the next verse (Q. 4: 62), the text of which goes on without a break on the verso, now covered by a full-page illumination.[66] At that time, the beginning or end of the Qur'ān sections were not fixed in a very precise manner and variations on a few verses can be observed in various manuscripts.[67] But the copyists of series of two,

65 The location of the divisions of the Qur'ān text into sections of similar length was determined at an early date (see Ibn Abī Dā'ūd, *Kitāb al-maṣāḥif*, ed. A. Jeffery, Leiden, 1937, pp. 118–130; those in sevenths are on pp. 118–120 and 127).

66 T. Stanley, *The Qur'an and calligraphy*, pp. 10–11 and 109.

67 F. Déroche, *Les manuscrits du Coran*, pp. 23–26; for the sevenths, the manuscripts in the Fusṭāṭ collection agree closely with one of the lists preserved in the *Kitāb al-maṣāḥif* (Ibn Abī Dā'ūd, *Kitāb al-maṣāḥif*, p. 127; F. Déroche, *Les manuscrits du Coran*, p. 25).

four or seven volumes, for example, would stop at the end of the verse which, in the tradition they followed, corresponded to the end of each of the parts concerned – half, quarter or seventh. This is not the case here, and various arguments have been put forward to support the view that this illumination is a part of the original scheme of the manuscript. As this point requires further analysis, I will return to it later.

3.2 *The Changes Made to the Manuscript*

3.2.1 The Text

In Q. 38: 22 (f. 6.3 r, l. 1), the first words of the line have been rewritten after erasing what was there before. As the space was not sufficient, the first word of the addition/correction (*minhum*) encroaches slightly on the bottom margin. Although the person in charge of this correction has endeavoured to maintain the same style of gold script, there are slight differences which suggest a post-copy intervention.

M. Fraser drew attention to passages that are located in the last ten verses of s. 2 and the first ten of the next, where the letters themselves have been eliminated, the initial headband of s. 3 having been treated in the same way.[68] These are not, as he points out, parts where the gilding has flaked off as happened elsewhere, but could represent a change of plan by the copyist, since in one case words have been replaced by corrections "in the same gold script and with the reddish-brown outline as in the rest of the text."[69] These erasures are not associated with any of the points in the Qur'ān corresponding to the division into seven sections – as is the case with the full-page illumination just mentioned.

3.2.2 The Ornament

At a date that remains to be determined, the manuscript underwent a series of modifications. The titles of the suras and the ornaments associated with the divisions of the text were added, using silver – a material rarely used in the manufacture of manuscripts.[70] The oxidation of this material has caused

68 M. Fraser, The origins, pp. 204–205 and n. 42; the folios in question are f. 1.24 to 1.29.

69 *Ibid.*, p. 204.

70 The 693/1294 inventory mentions the silver ornaments, probably because they were highly unusual. The evidence on the use of silver in Islamic manuscripts is scant. An Umayyad-era text reports a silver binding (al-Jahshiyarī, *Kitāb al-wuzarā' wa-l-kuttāb*, ed. M. al-Saqqā, I. al-Abyārī and 'A. Shalabī, Cairo, 1938, p. 37) and, towards 800/1400, the 'purple Qur'ān' of Tunis provides an example of writing with silver-based ink (Paris, BnF Arabe 389–392; F. Déroche, *Les manuscrits du Coran. Du Maghreb à l'Insulinde,* Paris, 1985, t. 1–2, pp. 36–37 and pl. IX A). See A. George, Calligraphy, colour and light, p. 97.

the various components to blacken, and in the case of the decorations this makes them difficult to examine. These various elements in silver are not contemporary with the production of the copy, as J. Bloom thought,[71] but are a later addition, as A. George and Marcus Fraser have shown:[72] the original verse separators, in gold like the text itself, are actually covered by silver rosettes, probably of type 3.1.2, throughout the manuscript;[73] under some of them, the original decoration of dashes (type 1. 1.1) can still be seen (fig. 5.2), e.g., between verses 37 and 38 of s. 4 (f. 1.47 r, l. 3), 61 and 62 of s. 18 (f. 4.14 v, l. 2), 9 and 10 of s. 29 (f. 5.7 r, l. 3)[74] or v. 53 and 54 of s. 43 (f. 6.7 r, l. 15). In several cases, the dashes are not covered at all by the rosettes and remain perfectly visible.[75]

The addition of silver ornaments is not limited to the separations of the verses,[76] but also includes ornaments for the tens. In this case, they do not cover the 1.A.1 roundels, which correspond to the original state of the manuscript, but they have been drawn in the margin because of their larger size. Despite the problems of legibility caused by the oxidation of the silver,[77] several types can be distinguished. Most can be classified in the series of ten-verses ornaments which, in the typology I proposed in 1983,[78] belong to the types identified by the initial number 3, i.e., circular decorations whose outline is formed by large petals. Examples of 3.B.II, the most frequent, 3.C.II and 3.D.II appear in the manuscript.[79] Less frequent is the derived decoration 5.D.II (fig. 5.5).[80] There is a unique case with a 1.B.Ie ornament.[81]

In order to better appreciate the situation, it is worth recalling that there are examples of manuscripts where the decorations for the groups of ten verses are double: one, in the text area, is simple and often includes an *abjad*

71 J. Bloom, The Blue Koran revisited, pp. 212–213.

72 T. Stanley had already pointed this out (*The Qur'an and calligraphy*, p. 11). For J. Bloom, who considers it a "needless complication to the manuscript's history," "the idea that silver was not part of the original scheme does not make sense" (The Blue Koran revisited, p. 212).

73 A. George, Calligraphy, colour and light, p. 90; M. Fraser, The origins, pp. 203–204 and ill. 7.

74 On the first line of this folio, the original decoration has not been covered.

75 Between v. 39 and 40 of s. 29, 48 and 49 of s. 30, 33 and 34 of s. 31, where the separation appears on the first line of the folio.

76 M. Fraser, The origins, p. 204.

77 The decorations on f. 4.13 r, 4.21 r, 4.23 r and v, 5.3 v, 5.4 v and 7.3 r are illegible.

78 F. Déroche, *Les manuscrits du Coran*, pp. 29–30 and pl. XXIII (Table 1 in F. Déroche, *Abbasid tradition*, p. 25, does not render certain important details).

79 See for example, for type 3.B.II, f. 1.6 v, 1.8 r, 2.2 r, 3.1 r, 4.1 r; for 3.C.II (or 3.C.I), f. 6.4 r, 6.7 v, 7.1 r; and for 3.D.II, f 7.4 r.

80 For type 5.D.II, see f. 1.31 r, 3.2 r, 4.12 r, 5.7 r, 6.4 r or 6.8 v.

81 F. 6.7 r. The typology of the ornaments of series 1 has been further refined by new examples that came to light after 1983.

numeral, while the other, in the margin, is in a larger size and gives this same indication in full. The most representative example of this layout is the copy of the Qurʾān in gold ink, with five lines to the page, which is the first of the manuscripts described in the 693/1294 inventory of Kairouan's Great Mosque library.[82] For its part, the Fusṭāṭ collection in Paris contains specimens such as BnF Arabe 334 k (D I) and 349 c (D III).[83] This arrangement, known from copies from the second half of the third/ninth century or the beginning of the following one, may have inspired the modification brought to the Blue Qurʾān. In all the cases mentioned, however, the colour materials used are identical for both ornaments, which is not the case for the Blue Qurʾān. This difference also supports the hypothesis that the silver ornaments are an addition.

The titles of the suras and the number of their verses, absent in the initial state of the copy, were also added in the margin, in silver: on the one hand, the material used suggests that they are part of the same operation as the verse separations, and on the other hand, their position corresponds to a method that seems to have been used at that time only for additions. Two parallel cases are known. One is the fragment Paris, BnF Arabe 337 c, transcribed in a script close to that of D IV,[84] and originating from Fusṭāṭ. The titles of the suras were originally written in red, between the suras; at a later date, they were copied as they were in gold letters in the margin at the height of the initial title. The style of script is distinct from that of the text and recalls D III. The other manuscript, of unknown origin, Istanbul, Topkapı Sarayı EH 21, copied in a style close to D IV, has anepigraphic bands to separate the suras. Here again, their title has been added in the margin in gold ink.

4 Date and Place of Production

The attribution of the manuscript to Iran, Tunisia, Sicily, Iraq or Spain, either in the third/ninth or fourth/tenth century, is based in principle on the characteristics that I have summarised above, but perhaps even more so on the conditions in which its folios were brought to public attention. Before considering

82 F. Déroche, A note, pp. 79–80. I. Chabbouh identified the manuscript with his no. 35 (Sijill, p. 353–354 and figs. 5 inf. and 6 sup.); see, e.g., M. Lings and Y. Safadi, *The Qurʾan*, p. 26, nos. 16, 17 and 19, pl. I, II and III or T. Stanley, *The Qurʾan and calligraphy*, pp. 16–19, 106–107, ill. pp. 60–61.

83 F. Déroche, *Les manuscrits du Coran*, pp. 85 and 103 respectively.

84 *Ibid.*, p. 109. The description in the catalogue is not complete: to the list of added titles should be added that on f. 45 v. In the reproduction on the Gallica website, f. 47 and 48 are missing.

the date and place of production of the Blue Qur'ān, I think it is important to recall that the place of preservation of a manuscript should not be confused with the place of its production. The extremely complex history of this copy has had a direct impact on the conclusions that have been drawn previously, to the extent that the arguments used to defend one hypothesis or another have often failed to take into consideration the manuscript itself – its materiality and its text.

4.1 *The Date of Production*

The state of the text offers some indication which can help us in defining the period in which the Blue Qur'ān was produced. Its orthography no longer has the archaic features found on the *Codex Parisino-petropolitanus*.[85] It is also more advanced than that of the large twelve-line Qur'āns that I have proposed to attribute to the reign of the Abbasid caliph al-Mahdī (r. 158/775–169/785): *dhū* has thus lost its final *alif*.[86] It is not, however, a completely modern orthography, but reflects an advanced phase in the process. Thus, the Blue Qur'ān adopts a variable position with regard to the /ā/, as a quick comparison with Paris, BnF Arabe 348 b and e – two fragments in style D I, datable to the third/ninth century – shows. In Q. 7: 144 (f. 2.6 v), the copyist of the Blue Qur'ān wrote *bi-risālatī* without an *alif* whereas there is one in Arabe 348 e, f. 98 r; in Q. 7: 145 (f. 2.6 v), we read *alwāḥ* without an *alif* whereas this letter is present in Arabe 348 e (f. 98v). Further on, one encounters other examples of defective spelling (Q. 19: 61, f. 4.20 v: *ʿibādahu*; 63, *ʿibādunā*, ibid.; and 71, f. 4.21 r: *wāriduhā*), while Arabe 348 b adopts the *scriptio plena* for the same words (f. 42 v, 43 r, and 44 v respectively). On the other hand, both the Blue Qur'ān (f. 4.20 v) and Arabe 348 b (f. 42 v and 43 v) are defective in Q. 19: 62 (*salāman*) and 66 (*insān*). The Blue Qur'ān would thus be slightly more archaic in its use of *scriptio defectiva*, but with indications of an evolution towards *scriptio plena*.

There is, however, one point on which our manuscript is consistently conservative: for the *bi-āyātinā*, it strictly adheres to the 'four-denticle' orthography found in the oldest Qur'ān manuscripts, such as the *Codex Parisino-petropolitanus*.[87] This feature appears in Q. 4: 56 (f. 1.49 r, l. 12–13),

85 F. Déroche, *La transmission écrite du Coran dans les débuts de l'islam. Le codex Parisino-petropolitanus*, Leiden-Boston, 2009, pp. 51–75.

86 See Of volumes and skins. The Qur'anic manuscripts of al-Mahdi, in *Research articles and studies in honour of Iraj Afshar*, I. Chabbouh and F. Déroche eds., London, 2018, p. 151.

87 This designation refers to the ancient orthography of *bi-āyātinā* where the four denticles correspond successively to two *yā'*s (the second to indicate the /ā/), one *tā'* and the *nūn* of the possessive suffix *-nā*; in the fragment in D IV style Paris, BnF Arabe 337 f, f. 92 r, l. 8, one will find one of the rare examples of the complete punctuation of the various denticles.

19: 77 (f. 4.21 v, l. 11), 29: 47 and 49 (f. 5.10 v, l. 3 and 10; fig. 5.4) or 57: 19 (f. 7.5 v, l. 12), to choose examples covering the whole text. The position of the Blue Qurʾān can be compared in this respect with the practice of Qurʾān copies of the third/ninth century. As for the other D IV manuscripts from Fusṭāṭ, there is a real homogeneity about this orthography which is attested in the fragments Paris, BnF Arabe 334 g,[88] 336,[89] 337 c,[90] 337 f[91] and 349 b.[92] A survey of the Fusṭāṭ fragments in other writing styles in the BnF collection reveals that they were evolving on this point. Of course, the 'four-denticle' form of *bi-āyātinā*, the one we find in the Blue Qurʾān, is also found in fragments of type B II,[93] D I,[94] D III[95] and exceptionally NS.[96] In manuscripts from Damascus, this orthography still appears on the 'Qurʾān of Amājūr' which predates 262/876: a fragment from this manuscript (Cambridge, University Library, Add. 1116) shows on f. 10 v *bi-āyāt* with two denticles before the final *tāʾ* (Q. 3: 70).[97] Conversely, a 'three-denticle' orthography in which the first denticle is followed by an *alif* that substitutes for the second denticle (*yāʾ*) of the older orthography is first fully present in the D III style manuscripts of Fusṭāṭ.[98] A Damascus manuscript in D Vb style, probably slightly later, attests to the progression of the *alif* in *bi-āyāt* (Cambridge, UL, Add. 1127, f. 4r; Q. 10: 71).[99] The

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This spelling with the two *yā*'s is also found in forms such as *bi-āyāt*, etc. See F. Déroche, *La transmission du Coran*, p. 54.

88 F. 67 v, l. 10 (Q 30: 53).

89 F. 18 v, l. 16–17 (Q 40: 23) and 28 v, l. 8 (Q 54: 42).

90 F. 22 r, l. 13 (Q 7: 136).

91 F. 91 v, l. 12 (Q 10: 73) and 92 r, l. 8 (Q 10: 75).

92 F. 28r, l. 3–4 (Q 7: 147).

93 Paris, BnF Arabe 338 a, f. 7 r; 340 f, f. 82 r and 83 b (F. Déroche, *Les manuscrits du Coran*, pp. 71 and 72).

94 Paris, BnF Arabe 325 k, f. 137 r; 348 b, f. 46 v, e, f. 99 v and 108 v; 350 a, f. 94 r and 140 r, b, f. 187 r (F. Déroche, *Les manuscrits du Coran*, pp. 84, 86–87 and 88–89).

95 Paris, BnF Arabe 334 l, f. 178 v; 341 b, f. 180 r and 194 v; 362 a, f. 73 v (F. Déroche, *Les manuscrits du Coran*, pp. 101–102 and 105).

96 Paris, BnF Arabe 374 c, f. 51 v (F. Déroche, *Les manuscrits du Coran*, p. 140).

97 See https://cudl.lib.cam.ac.uk/view/MS-ADD-01116/22 (last accessed 6 October 2022).

98 Paris, BnF Arabe 325 i, f. 44 r; 341 a, f. 34 v, 63 r and 88 v; 351, f. 46 v; 362 a, f. 79 r (F. Déroche, *Les manuscrits du Coran*, pp. 101, 100–101, 103–104 and 105–106). An indicative date of around 264/877 is given by the fragments Paris, BnF Arabe 5178 h and St. Petersburg, NLR, Marcel 110 (see F. Déroche, Un fragmento coranico datado en el siglo III/IX, in *Γραφειον Codices, manuscritos e imagenes, Estudios filologicos e historicos*, J.P. Monferrer Sala and M. Marcos Aldon eds., *Studia Semitica* 2, Cordova, 2003, pp. 127–139; id., The Caliph, his mawla and the mushaf, in *Zeren Tanındı Armağanı: İslam Dünyasında Kitap Sanatı ve Kültürü / Zeren Tanındı Festschrift: Art and Culture of Books in the Islamic World*, A. Erkmen, Ş. Tamcan Parladır eds., İstanbul, 2022, pp. 240–246).

99 See https://cudl.lib.cam.ac.uk/view/MS-ADD-01127/9 (last accessed 6 October 2022).

more recent NS-style copies, and in particular one dated to the extreme end of the third/beginning of the tenth century, Dublin, Chester Beatty Library 1417A,[100] write *bi-āyātinā* in this way; next to the Dublin copy, possibly of Iranian origin, we can cite Paris, BnF Arabe 377 a (f. 12 r)[101] and 382 (f. 29 r and v for fragment b, f. 59 r for d) which were found in Fusṭāṭ.[102] The spelling used in the Blue Qur'ān thus represents an archaic feature that was disappearing in the course of the third/ninth century.

On the material side, further indications of date can be found. The initial ornamentation of the Blue Qur'ān fits well with the prevailing practice in D IV copies: the verses are generally separated by dashes of type 1.1.1.[103] As for the ten-verses markers, there is a slight preference in manuscripts from Fusṭāṭ for square-shaped ornaments placed in the text (A.A.I and A.A.II),[104] which are more frequent than simple roundels (1.A.I, 1.B.I).[105] In fragments from Damascus, squares are also present,[106] but in three cases a relatively developed circular ornament, 2'.A.II, was used.[107] The use of *abjad* numbers is also well attested there with six examples for Fusṭāṭ and four for Damascus.[108]

The sura decorations of the Blue Qur'ān were conceived as anepigraphic (fig. 5.3), which corresponds to an early usage that disappears in the third/ninth century. Within the group of BnF fragments of style D IV from Fusṭāṭ, only four contain sura beginnings. Apart from BnF Arabe 336 in vertical format, where a space left blank distinguishes the suras from each other, as in the *Codex Parisino-petropolitanus*,[109] the title and number of verses are indicated

100 Before 298/911, f. 22 r, l. 6 (Q 3: 11); see https://viewer.cbl.ie/viewer/image/Is_1417A/43/ (last accessed 6 October 2022); the *alif* is sandwiched between the *yā'* and the *tā'*, which might suggest a correction, but the spelling is confirmed a few leaves later by *bi-āyāt* in Q 3: 19 (f. 25 r, l. 2) or in Q 3: 19 (f. 25 v, l. 5).

101 F. Déroche, *Les manuscrits du Coran*, p. 136.

102 F. Déroche, *Les manuscrits du Coran*, p. 141.

103 In the collection from Fusṭāṭ, I have noted the fragments Paris, BnF Arabe 334 f, 336, 337 c and f, 345 b, 349 b and 354 a, where they are covered by rosettes (F. Déroche, *Les manuscrits du Coran*, pp. 108–111); Arabe 334 g is an exception. In Kairouan, four fragments of varying degrees of development show the same characteristics (NMIA, R 53, 57, 159 and 174). Among the fragments from Damascus preserved in Berlin, all of them small, are the SB, We 1922 and 1937 mss.

104 Paris, BnF Arabe 334 f and g, 337 c and f, 349 b.

105 Paris, BnF Arabe 334 f, 345 b, 5178 b and 6002 a.

106 Berlin, SB, We 1923.

107 Berlin, SB, We 1921, 1922 and 1937.

108 Paris, BnF Arabic 334 f, 334 g, 337 e, 340 e, 349 b and 354 a (Fusṭāṭ) and the four Berlin fragments mentioned above (Damascus).

109 F. Déroche, *La transmission écrite du Coran*, p. 30.

on the other copies.[110] However, parallels exist in Istanbul: ms TKS, Y 753 is a copy in D IV style with anepigraphic headbands, and so is ms EH 21, in a style close to D IV; in the latter, as in the Blue Qur'ān, the titles of the suras have been added in the margin in gold script. Anepigraphic decoration is extremely rare: it is attested in the Umayyad period,[111] but seems to have disappeared in the Abbasid period. The large 12-line Qur'āns that I have proposed to attribute to the reign of Caliph al-Mahdī are among the few late examples of this.[112] For his part, A. George has pointed out that anepigraphic sura decorations are associated with copies of the Qur'ān made in writing styles such as B Ib, C II, C III and F I, which can be attributed to the early Abbasid period.[113] In addition to the references that he mentions,[114] the Kairouan fragment NMIA, R 39, in C Ia style, is one of only two examples of this presentation in the Tunisian collection;[115] the other, NMIA, R 441, in D V style, seems to be later. Within the collection of Fusṭāṭ fragments in the BnF, Arabe 333 c illustrates this manner.[116] In contrast, in Qur'ān manuscripts of other styles which can be dated later in the third/ninth century,[117] the title of the sura and its number of verses are consistently indicated, whether these data are placed in a headband or not.[118]

110 Paris, BnF Arabe 337 c, 345 b and 349 b. Two other fragments of different provenance, Paris, BnF Arabe 5124 and 6002 a indicate the title and number of verses (F. Déroche, *Aux origines*, pp. 110–111). In two fragments, Arabic 345 b and 5124, the title is introduced by *fātiḥa* ...

111 For instance mss Dublin, CBL, Is 1404; Istanbul, TIEM, ŞE 71, 321, 1186, Kairouan, NMIA, R 38 (F. Déroche, *Qur'ans of the Umayyads. A first overview*, Leiden-Boston, 2014, fig. 35–37, 31, 19–24, 29, 40–42 respectively). In several cases, such as Paris BnF, Arabe 330 c-St. Petersburg, NLR, Marcel 13 or Ṣana'ā', Dār al-makhṭūṭāt, Inv. 20–33.1, the title has been added.

112 F. Déroche, Twenty leaves from the Tashkent Koran, in *God is beautiful. He loves beauty. The object in Islamic art and culture*, Sh. Blair and J. Bloom eds., New Haven-London, 2013, pp. 57–77; id., Of volumes and skins, pp. 146–172.

113 A. George, Calligraphy, colour and light, p. 81 and n. 36.

114 Fragments from the Khalili collection nos 7, 8, 15 and 17 (F. Déroche, *The Abbasid tradition*, pp. 49, 53, 54, 62–63 and 65; *Earthly beauty, Heavenly art. Art of Islam*, M. Piotrovsky ed., Amsterdam, 2001, pp. 103–104, nos 39–41; M. Fraser and W. Kwiatkowski, *Ink and gold: Islamic calligraphy*, London, 2006, p. 28).

115 *Al-Muṣḥaf al-sharif attributed to 'Uthmān bin 'Affān* (*The copy at the Topkapı Palace Museum*), T. Altıkulaç ed., Istanbul, 1428/2007, pl. 7; *Lumières de Kairouan*, Tunis, 2009, p. 35.

116 F. Déroche, *Les manuscrits du Coran*, pp. 82–83.

117 Three of the manuscripts included in the sample mentioned below have been radiocarbon dated (see F. Déroche, *Qur'ans of the Umayyads*, pp. 12–13).

118 The comparison with two samples of manuscripts or fragments in B II, D I, D III and NS styles strongly supports the hypothesis that the inclusion of the title and number of verses became a general feature of the Qur'āns produced during the third/ninth century. Among

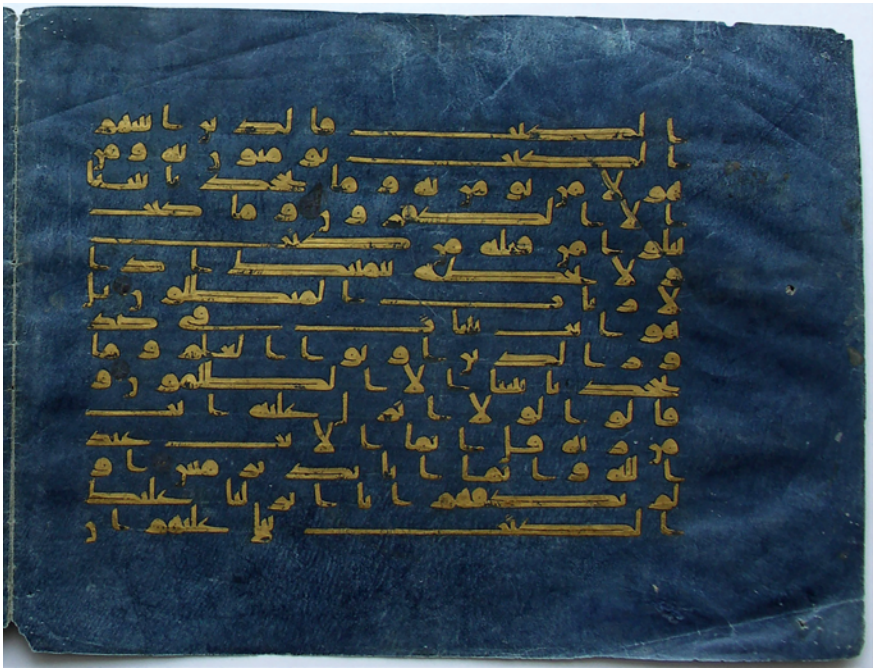

FIGURE 5.4 Ms Kairouan/Raqqāda, National Museum of Islamic Art, R 197, f. 5.10 v. Q. 29: 47–51. Examples of the "four-denticle" orthography of *bi-āyātinā* (l. 3 and 10)
© INP/RAQQĀDA, NMIA

In general, D IV Qur'ān manuscripts are rather archaic. One of them (Paris, BnF Arabe 336) is still in vertical format, like the earliest copies of the Qur'ān, and their orthography and decoration still cling to old models – and the Blue Qur'ān is no exception to this. In the absence of the direct data I have outlined above, these clues allow us to draw certain conclusions about the date of production. From the outset, a date as late as the fourth/tenth century is ruled out by the various archaic features encountered. Comparisons with copies of other styles that can be dated to the third/ninth century, such as D I, D III or B II, reveal a few similarities, but the Blue Qur'ān differs from them in that it also has features that are linked to an earlier layer of the handwritten tradition.

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the fragments containing transitions from one sura to the next one, there is complete agreement between the Fusṭāṭ fragments in the BnF (42) and the Kairouan collection (64): there is no instance of anepigraphic illumination, as in the Blue Qur'ān, or blank space, as in Paris, BnF, Arabe 336. The carbon-dated fragments are Kairouan/Raqqada NMIA R 10 (D I; C14 date AD 676–869 with 95% probability), R 58 (D III; C14 date AD 672–853 with 95% probability) and R 64 a (D III; see F. Déroche, *Qur'ans of the Umayyads*, p. 12 and n. 65).

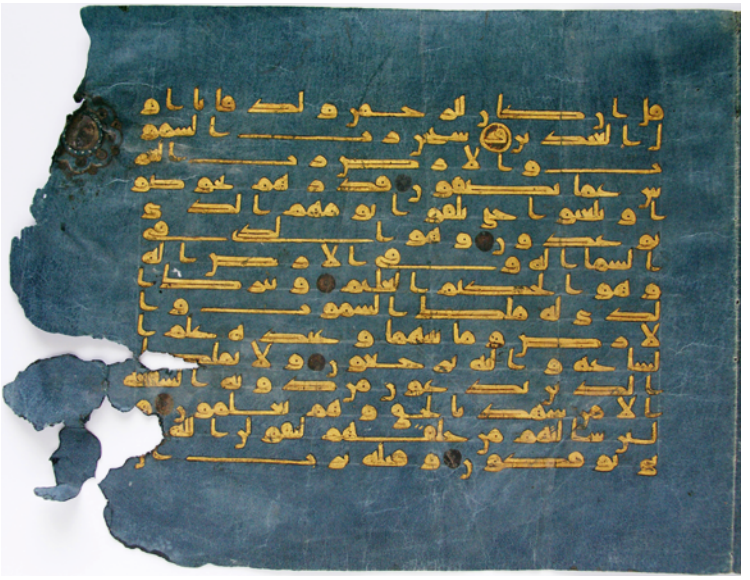

FIGURE 5.5 Ms Kairouan/Raqqāda, National Museum of Islamic Art, R 197, f. 6.9 r. Q. 43: 81–88. Diacritical punctuation of *qāf* (l. 14). Traces of the ruling. 1.A.1 roundel with *abjad* numeral (*fā'* = 80). In the margin, 5.D.11 ornament for ten verses
© INP/RAQQĀDA, NMIA

FIGURE 5.6 Ms Kairouan/Raqqāda, National Museum of Islamic Art, R 197, f. 6.8 v. Q. 43: 71–80. Variant reading (*qirā'a*) in Q. 43: 71 (l. 2). 1.A.1 roundel with *abjad* numeral (*'ayn* = 70)
© INP/RAQQĀDA, NMIA

A C14 dating of a D IV manuscript, Tehran, National Museum of Iran 4319, "entitles [Ali Aghaei and Michael J. Marx] to claim that parchment of no. 4319 was produced between 670 and 776 CE."[119] This result points to an early date for DIV, but should be taken with caution as it is almost identical with an unpublished C 14 dating of Paris, BnF, Arabe 324, f. 19 (662–781 CE, with 97.4% of probability), which exhibits an earlier stage of Qur'ānic orthography, as I noted above. A comparison of the orthography of NMI 4319, p. 48 with the f. 6.8 of the Blue Qur'ān shows no difference – both adhering, for instance, to the old 'four-denticle' spelling of *bi-āyātinā*. In view of the various elements at hand, I would date the Blue Qur'ān from the beginning of the third/ninth century, or even from the very end of the second/eighth century.

4.2 *The Place of Production*

A first element to be taken into account when discussing the place of production of the manuscript is its diacritical punctuation. J. Bloom noted its presence and asked the question: "does the presence of these marks help to date or localize the script?"[120] The answer to the second point is clearly: yes. The marks are not very abundant, but crucial in that the copyist(s) distinguished the *fā'* from the *qāf* by punctuating them in the Eastern manner, i.e., with one dash above the *fā'* and two above the *qāf*. The Muslim West proceeds differently and writes a dash or dot above the *qāf* while the *fā'* is indicated by the diacritic placed below the letter (fig. 5.2). On folios already known for a long time, marks of the *fā'* were present but have not been reported: on the Fogg Art Museum folio (f. 1.18 r), at l. 12, the *fā'* of *bi-ma'rūf* in Q. 2: 231 is punctuated according to the Eastern way, and the same is true on the third folio in the CBL in Q. 2: 96 (f. 1.7 v, l. 1: *alf*). Examples of this feature abound, in different parts of the manuscript: it is found, for example, in Q. 2: 199 (f. 1.16 r, l. 4: *afāḍa*), in Q. 12: 21 (f. 3.3 v, l. 12: *li-Yūsuf*), 28: 81 (f. 5.6 r, l. 8: *fa-khasafnā*), or again in Q. 33: 32 (f. 5.17 r, l. 4: *fa-lā*). There are fewer occurrences of dotted *qāf*: I have noted them in Q. 7: 137 (f. 2.5 v, l. 8: final *qāf* of the word *mashāriq*, "eastern lands"),

119 A. Aghaei and M.J. Marx, Carbon dating of seven parchment Qur'ān manuscripts and one Syriac Bible of the National Museum of Iran, *Journal of Iran National Museum* 2-1, serial 2 (2021), p. 213. Two other D IV fragments, Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Cod. arab. 2569 and 2817, have been dated 720–880 and 725–886 by this technique (M.J. Marx and T.J. Jocham, Radiocarbon (14C) dating of Qur'ān manuscripts, in *Qur'ān quotations preserved on papyrus documents*, A. Kaplony and M. Marx eds., Leiden-Boston, 2019, p. 216, Table 6.2); unfortunately, I could not have access to a reproduction in order to make the necessary checks.

120 J. Bloom, The Blue Koran revisited, pp. 213–214.

13: 26 (f. 3.7 r, l. 9: *al-rizq*)[121] and 43: 87 (f. 6.9 r, l. 14: *khalaqahum*; fig. 5.5), for example. If, as is likely, the Blue Qur'ān was produced collaboratively, all those who worked together used the same punctuation system. This is a strong indication that the copy was made in a region where this practice was common, i.e., in the Near East.

In Nuruosmaniye 27, both *fā'* and *qāf* are punctuated 'in the Oriental way' and the same is true of a number of manuscripts from Fusṭāṭ. To stick to the D IV style group, BnF fragments Arabe 334 f and 336 present only examples of eastern punctuation of the *fā'*,[122] while 334 g provides a case of punctuation of the *qāf* with two dots above the letter.[123] Both letters are punctuated in the oriental manner in Arabe 337 f.[124] Arabic 337 c is an exception: the *fā'* is punctuated as in the Blue Qur'ān, but the *qāf* is identified by a dot placed below the head of the letter. In Kairouan, two of the manuscripts in D IV style follow the oriental usage in the punctuation of the *fā'* and *qāf*,[125] while a third one conforms to the Maghribī usage.[126] From these observations it is clear that, on this point, the Qur'ān manuscripts in D IV style conformed to local usage: unless one assumes that oriental copyists repeatedly moved to the Muslim West where they would have preserved their tradition of diacritical punctuation, Ockham's razor suggests the simpler solution, that of manuscripts brought from the East in the course of one of the many journeys that the inhabitants of North Africa or Muslim Spain might have undertaken to that region.[127]

This purely formal indication, which excludes production in Ifriqiya and more generally in the Muslim West, is supported by textual data: the *qirā'a* of the manuscript. The history of "readings" in the third/ninth century still needs further studies and the absence of any indication of short vowels on the Blue Qur'ān considerably limits the points in the text where observations on this subject can be made; in fact, they are reduced to those where a word whose

121 T. Stanley, *The Qur'an and calligraphy*, p. 62, item 12, folio on the left.

122 Paris, BnF Arabe 334 f, f. 66 v, for instance, l. 2, 4, etc., see https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b52508882b/f142.item.r=%22arabe%20334%22 (last accessed 6 October 2022); Arabe 336, f. 3 v, l. 18, see https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b11004808w/f10.item.r=%22arabe%20336%22 (last accessed 6 October 2022).

123 F. 67 v, l. 14: see https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b52508882b/f144.item.r=%22arabe%20334%22 (last accessed 6 October 2022).

124 F. 86 r, l. 4 (*fā'*) and 8 (*qāf*).

125 Kairouan/Raqqāda, NMIA, R 53 a (part in D IV style) and R 174 f.

126 Kairouan/Raqqāda, NMIA, R 159 g; some of the diacritical marks correspond to an addition.

127 If a meticulous palaeographic study were to confirm that the entire manuscript was produced by a group of copyists and not by a single calligrapher, this would make the hypothesis of travelling copyists even less tenable.

consonantal skeleton is the subject of significant variants appears.[128] Thus, on f. 5. 9 v, we find in Q. 29: 42 a variant that deviates from that of Ḥafṣ: *tadʿūna* is associated with the readers Ibn Kathīr of Mecca, Nāfiʿ and Abū Jaʿfar, both of Medina, Ibn ʿĀmir of Damascus, and the Kufan Ḥamza, al-Kisāʾī, al-Aʿmash as well as Shuʿba, for a less well attested variant. The 'vulgate' reading (Ḥafṣ *ʿan* ʿĀṣim), by contrast, is *yadʿūna*. In the manuscript, the dashes on the *tā'* are difficult to recognise and the initial letter could be interpreted as *nūn*, but none of the treatises on variant readings report *nadʿūna*; it is more likely that we have the canonical reading *tadʿūna* here. More interesting is the variant in f. 6.8 v, in Q. 43: 71 (fig. 5.6): *tashtahī* is associated on the one hand with the Meccan Ibn Kathīr, on the other with the Kufan Ḥamza, al-Kisāʾī, Shuʿba, transmitter of ʿĀṣim, as well as with Khalaf. This variant therefore rules out a Western origin since one would expect the Warsh reading deriving from the Medinan reading of Nāfiʿ.[129] Assuming that the copyist(s) made their way from the East to transcribe the Qurʾān text in North Africa or the Iberian Peninsula, they would probably have used a model that conformed to the customs of the Muslim West. As for the diacritics, the variant in Q. 43: 71 comes in support of a Near Eastern provenance. In addition to these remarks, there are three cases that could be copyist errors:

1) f. 1.6 v, l. 9: *maʿdūdūtan* instead of *maʿdūdatan*;
2) f. 1.33 r, l. 10: *wa-ʿamīlū* instead of *wa-ʿamilū*;
3) f. 4.15 r, l. 14–15: *aqul innaka* instead of *aqul laka innaka*.

At first sight, the analysis of the two systems of verse separation, the original one and the one that represents an addition, does not allow us to conclude that they correspond strictly to any of those described by Anton Spitaler on the basis of the information of the *kutub al-ʿadad*.[130] A closer examination of the ten-verse markers of the original division can, however, provide some clues. Thanks to their *abjad* numbers, we know the position of the tenth verses within the verse count followed by those who supervised the production of the manuscript and we can check them against the tables prepared by A. Spitaler (see Appendix 2).[131] Out of a sample of 73 items covering the seven volumes of the Blue Qurʾān, only four cases (f. 3.6 r, 3.7 r, 4.11 r and 7.3 v) are not recorded

128 See for instance [Th. Nöldeke], G. Bergsträsser and O. Pretzl, *Geschichte des Qorans.* Vol. 3, *Die Geschichte des Korantexts*, Leipzig, 1938, pp. 13–15. I thank Dr. E. Mahmutovic for his help on this topic.

129 The manuscript Tehran, NMI 4319, p. 48, l. 10, has the same reading (see A. Aghaei and M.J. Marx, Carbon dating, fig. 6).

130 A. Spitaler, *Die Verszählung des Koran nach islamischer Überlieferung*, Munich, 1935.

131 As noted by A. Spitaler, the tenth verses ("Zehner") are more often designated by their number (*Die Verszählung*, p. 13), which gives more weight to this information.

in the traditional literature.[132] For the rest, the matches clearly eliminate the Kufan (37 matches), Meccan (34) and Medinan (35) systems – thus discarding again the hypothesis of a Maghribī origin.[133] The Syrian one coincides in 50 instances with our findings in the manuscript, and in four cases it is the only one matching the tenth-verse division. However this system is not homogeneous, as it includes cases where a division is known in Damascus and another in Ḥimṣ. The Basran comes first, with a total of 61 matches (83%). In eight places, it is the only one which covers the situation found in the Blue Qurʾān. Even if its verse division is not completely in accordance with the Basran tradition as summarized by A. Spitaler, the ten-verses dividers in the manuscript show a very close relationship with it, which with the other clues points to a Near Eastern origin.[134] An analysis of the individual verses would be more complicated to carry out, due to the fragmentary state of the copy and to what seems to be the habit of the copyist(s) not to insert the 1.1.1 verse divider when the end of a verse coincides with the end of a line, leaving a doubt in many instances. On the other hand, I noticed that the basmala at the beginning of some suras is sometimes followed by a 1.1.1 sign (see e.g. f. 3.4 v, l. 4, or 5.16, l. 8). Conversely, the rosettes of the addition never appear in this place, except on f. 1.42 v where the original verse end has been covered by the new divider. In this case again, the old division evokes a situation well known in earlier manuscripts, but not in more recent copies – hence the dominant discrepancy about the basmala between the original verse dividers and the new ones.[135]

Two pieces of codicological data reinforce the hypothesis of an oriental provenance. From a material point of view the Blue Qurʾān is unique in the Muslim world, where no other blue parchment manuscript is known. The idea

132 The total of the matches found is obviously higher than the 73 because in many instances various systems agree on the verse division.

133 The verse counts fundamentally rely on the five *maṣāḥif al-amṣār* (Kūfa, Baṣra, Damascus, Mecca and Medina; see A. Spitaler, *Die Verszählung*, pp. 16–17) and imply therefore the authority of the Readers connected with them. If we accept the possibility of an early dominance in the Maghrib of the Kufan reading of Ḥamza (see F. Leemhuis, art. Readings of the Qurʾān, *Encyclopaedia of the Qurʾān* 4, p. 360), the Blue Qurʾān was clearly not produced according to this tradition. As far as the *muṣḥaf* of Medina is concerned, Nāfiʿ is directly involved (A. Spitaler, *Die Verszählung*, pp. 24–28). Since his reading transmitted by Warsh became prevalent in the Western part of the Islamic world, these results show that the Blue Qurʾān does not follow the Medinan tradition either.

134 On the limited basis of a quick survey of the D IV fragments from Fusṭāṭ in the BnF, the verse division of Arabe 334 f, 337 e and 349 b might also be related to the Basran tradition. This is not the case for Arabe 336, 337 c and 345 b. The size of the fragments is obviously not sufficient to reach a conclusion and more in-depth research is required in this direction.

135 Compare with F. Déroche, *La transmission écrite du Coran,* p. 92.

of dyeing parchment has itself been linked to well-known Byzantine practices,[136] but the search for parallels to the use of blue and gold ink leads to further away from the Mediterranean, to China or Japan.[137] As M. Fraser points out, and despite the admiration the manuscript arouses today, it seems to be a hapax throughout the Islamic world during the period when parchment was used for the transcription of the Qur'ān, an operation that has not been followed up.[138] If we consider the Kairouan collection, it is the only example of dyed parchment. In contrast, parchment was dyed to make copies of the Qur'ān in the East. Several folios of orange, possibly originally purple, are known,[139] and the Damascus Papers collection contains various examples of dyed parchment:[140] purplish,[141] yellow[142] and salmon pink.[143] In addition, several of these folios show a hardpoint ruling system such as that of the Blue Qur'ān: this is the case of the fragments Istanbul, TIEM, ŞE 307, 11806/2 and 12802/6. These fragments, long preserved in Damascus before being transferred to Istanbul, confirm the existence of parchment-dyeing activity in the East for copies of the Qur'ān and suggest that hardpoint ruling has much more to do with the fact that the parchment was dyed than with a geographically defined practice.[144] The writing styles C,[145] B II[146] and D IV[147] are used in these different copies; in my opinion, they were in use between the late second/eighth century and the third/ninth century, which supports the dating suggested above.[148] The Blue Qur'ān

136 These practices were in turn imitated in the Christian West.

137 M. Fraser, The origins, pp. 199–200 and fig. 2.

138 *Ibid.*, pp. 200–203 and fig. 3. The dyed writing support is of course paper, not parchment. Of course, caution must be exercised, as similar manuscripts may have disappeared in the millennium following the production of the Blue Qur'ān (on the caution imposed by the state of our documentation, see the remarks of R. Bagnall, *Everyday writing in the Greco-Roman East*, Berkeley-Los Angeles, 2010, p. 118).

139 M. Fraser, The origins, p. 200 and fig. 3.

140 On the origin of this collection, see F. Déroche, In the beginning: Early Qur'ans from Damascus, in *The Art of the Qur'an. Treasures from the Museum of Turkish and Islamic Arts*, M. Farhad and S. Rettig eds., Washington, DC, 2016, p. 63.

141 Istanbul, TIEM, ŞE 13686/3.

142 Istanbul, TIEM, ŞE 307 and 12802/6.

143 Istanbul, TIEM, ŞE 11806/2. It is probably from the same manuscript that the New York folio MET 40.164.1 originates (M. Fraser, The origins, p. 200, n. 12 and fig. 3).

144 M. Fraser, The origins, p. 207; A. D'Ottone Rambach, The Blue Koran. A contribution to the debate on its possible origin and date, *Journal of Islamic Manuscripts* 8 (2017), pp. 135–136.

145 Istanbul, TIEM, ŞE 11806/2 and 12802/6.

146 Istanbul, TIEM, ŞE 13686/3.

147 Istanbul, TIEM, ŞE 307.

148 J. Bloom refers to Sh. Blair who "explained the presence of ruling as a sign of the manuscript's relatively late date" (The Blue Koran revisited, pp. 209–210): she does not explain in any way why she considers that this supports a late date, the one defended by J. Bloom,

would thus have been produced at a time when, for reasons that remain to be defined, the manufacture of copies of the Qur'ān on dyed parchment had been undertaken in the Near East.

The dating and identification of the region where the Blue Qur'ān was produced that have been argued above coincide broadly with A. George's conclusions.[149] The parallels he has proposed are still meaningful and need not be discussed at length. I would like to point out that he has shown that the combination of gold and blue may have been inspired by models that originated under the Umayyads and the early Abbasids. The Umayyad inscription on the Dome of the Rock, with its dark green background approximating blue, makes use of gold for the text, a combination that can be paralleled with what we know from Arabic sources about inscriptions in the mosques of Medina and Damascus.[150] The Baysān inscription, from the same period, provides concrete evidence for this combination of gold and blue in epigraphy.[151] Other examples from the early Abbasid period can be added to the previous ones. The inscriptions of the caliph al-Mahdī on the doors of the Prophet's mosque imitated those of the Umayyad al-Walīd; various clues suggest that a similar assemblage may have adorned the walls of the mosque of al-Mutawakkil (r. 232/847–247/861) in Samarra.[152] Remains of a dark blue background for the inscription of this caliph on the Nilometer of the island of Rawḍa in Fusṭāṭ, dated 247/862, corroborate a piece of information preserved by Ibn Khallikān and give more consistency to this bundle of evidence.[153] As A. George points out, all the cases involve a caliphal patronage.[154]

The vignettes, on the other hand, show striking similarities with early Umayyad or Abbasid art. The compositions of scrolls that close on a three-lobed leaf are reminiscent of the wooden and bone objects analysed by Maurice Dimand.[155] A more precise comparison could be made with one of the panels of the minbar of the Great Mosque of Kairouan, where the scrolls are organised on either side of a trunk or a column;[156] it is said to have been imported

noting only that the manuscript stands out from the rest of the early Qur'ān manuscripts and must therefore be more recent than the rest (*Islamic calligraphy*, pp. 45 and 127).

149 A. George, Calligraphy, colour and light, pp. 97–104.

150 *Ibid.*, p. 97.

151 E. Khamis, Two wall mosaic inscriptions from the Umayyad market place in Bet Shean/Baysān, *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, 64–2 (2001), pp. 159–176.

152 A. George, Calligraphy, colour and light, p. 101.

153 *Ibid.*, pp. 101–103.

154 *Ibid.*, p. 104.

155 M.A. Dimand, Studies in Islamic ornament, I. Some aspects of Omaiyad and early ʿAbbāsid ornament, *Ars Islamica* 4 (1937), pp. 293–337.

156 *Ibid.*, fig. 10.

from Baghdad towards the middle of the third/ninth century, as were the lustre ceramic tiles.

These various points – diacritical punctuation, *qirā'a* (text and verse division), the use of dyed parchment or models in other areas of the visual arts – converge to support an attribution of the manuscript to the Near East. A more precise definition of the place of production remains elusive for the moment. I would lean towards either of two cities, Fusṭāṭ or Baghdad, but there is no strong argument to support either hypothesis. At least some of the manuscripts from the deposit of the 'Amr Mosque in Fusṭāṭ must have been produced locally, which assumes the existence of local copyists and craftsmen capable of producing a copy of the Qur'ān such as the Blue Qur'ān. The Nilometer inscription with its Qur'ānic quotations could have been either an imitation of a locally produced Qur'ān or a model – which, of course, would have implications for the date of the manuscript. However, none of the fragments in the Fusṭāṭ collection are copied onto dyed parchment. Baghdad, favoured by A. George,[157] poses a different problem: a deposit similar to that of Fusṭāṭ does not exist in that city and we have no evidence that would allow us to identify manuscripts that were copied in the Abbasid capital – even if some caution is still required, as stressed above. However, Baghdad clearly had the necessary skills to produce a manuscript such as the Blue Qur'ān. Indigo, as we have seen, was too common to support one attribution over the other and the Basran reading, which seems to favour Baghdad, was also not unknown in Egypt.

5 The Date of Modification of the Manuscript

5.1 *Verse Separations*

The silver end-of-verse decorations covered, at least in part, an older system. As noted by T. Stanley, then A. George, and as confirmed by M. Fraser, they are an addition, and J. Bloom's opinion that they were contemporary with the copy must be definitively discarded.[158] Moreover, a glance at other copies in the same script style (D IV) shows that type 1.1.1 separators are usual there, while type 3.2.1 rosettes are associated with other scripts, notably D I, which is close to that of the titles, which also constitute an addition. Modifications to the initial verse separations are not exceptional in Fusṭāṭ manuscripts: rosettes were, for example, added above the initial division (1.1.1) of the fragment Paris,

157 A. George, Calligraphy, colour and light, p. 104.

158 J. Bloom, The Blue Koran revisited, p. 214.

BnF Arabe 5124,[159] perhaps also to that of Arabe 334 g, both of which are in D IV style.[160]

The same observation can be made with regard to the silver decorations of tens placed in the margin: their typology clearly belongs to another group than D IV, which favours simpler forms. Most of them can be compared with group 3 series (3.B.II, 3.C.II and 3.D.II), with petals whose centre and peripheral contact points are enhanced by a coloured dot; some can be associated with the type 5.D.II decorations which are composed in a similar way, the shape of the petals differing slightly. The number of the ten is always indicated in full in the central circle. In the Fusṭāṭ collection, all these types are found in group D I, but especially D III manuscripts. In contrast, the type 1.B.Ie decoration that appears to signal the end of v. 50 of s. 43 (f. 6.7 r) is unique of its kind. These various elements suggest that the additions were made at a time when this repertoire was in use, i.e., in the third/ninth or perhaps even early fourth/tenth century.

5.2 *The Full-Page Illumination*

This conclusion allows us to return to the question of the full-page illumination, mentioned above (f. 1.50 v). It is found on an isolated folio and corresponds to the end of the first of the seven volumes which, according to the medieval inventory, made up the series. As we have seen, the text on the recto stops after the first word of Q. 4:62, but the verse and those that followed continued on the back before the illumination concealed it.[161] T. Stanley, who published this folio, believes that this is either a copyist's error or a change of plans that led to a seven-volume copy.

As far as we know, there is no decoration comparable to that of the Blue Qur'ān in the manuscripts of D IV group. The corpus available to us is limited to very few examples, such as the manuscripts Istanbul, Nuruosmaniye 27 and TKS, Y 753, or the fragments Kairouan, NMIA, R 57a (fig. 5.7), and Toronto, Aga Khan Museum, AKM478:[162] these are frames that appear at the beginning

159 F. Déroche, *Les manuscrits du Coran*, pp. 110–111; the description is faulty on this point, but it is easy to check on Gallica: see https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b8555831j/f5.item.r=%22arabe%205124%22 (last accessed 6 October 2022).

160 This is visible only at the end of the last verse of f. 67 v. The catalogue description does not mention it (F. Déroche, *Les manuscrits du Coran*, p. 108). See https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b52508882b/f144.item.r=%22arabe%20334%22 (last accessed 6 October 2022).

161 T. Stanley indicates that an examination with a UV lamp of the verso revealed that it was a full page of text with Q 4: 62–65 (*The Qur'an and calligraphy*, p. 10).

162 *Chefs d'œuvre islamiques*, pp. 110–111. There is an inspirational relationship between this frame and that of the final folios of Nuruosmaniye 27, but the inscription on the verso

and/or end of the copy and in which the text is inscribed, and not full-page illuminations such as the one we are discussing now. In comparison with the first of these manuscripts, one would expect, for example, a frame with regularly arranged spaces within a central rectangular field in which sequences of letters would be placed, as can be seen on f. 221 v–223 r.[163] There is, however, a smaller copy in D IV style (ms Berlin, SB, We 1921) with a full-page illumination on f. 1 v: its central rectangular field of latticework is not without affinities to that on f. 1. 50 v of the Blue Qur'ān;[164] the composition on the Berlin fragment – which was previously in Damascus – is, however, more reminiscent of those associated with copies of styles such as D I, and a comparison with the Qur'ān of ʿAbd al-Munʿim presented as a *waqf* to the Damascus mosque in *dhū al-qaʿda* 298/July 911 is compelling.[165] The relationship between the illuminated folio of the Berlin fragment and the following ones (except perhaps f. 10) would, however, require closer examination: as can be seen on a picture, a restoration keeps f. 1 in its current position and the other half of the bifolio (f. 10) is in a different script from the rest. This parallel therefore does not seem to be relevant as far as the Blue Qur'ān is concerned.

The median vignette on f. 1.50 v could be a decisive element in the discussion of the full-page illumination. T. Stanley compares it to the one on the folio exhibited in London in 1976. A later reproduction gives a clearer idea of this element on f. 1.50 v which clearly does not belong to the same repertoire as the other vignettes in the manuscript, whose homogeneous character has already been emphasised:[166] that of f. 1.50 v is not based on the development of branches, but on a succession of symmetrically arranged fleshy leaves changing shape, sometimes with bifid terminations. The connection between the vignette and the rectangular illumination is very different from those used by the Blue Qur'ān illuminator for the vignettes of the sura headbands: on f. 1.50 v, the first pair of leaves is supported by a V unfolding between two golden dots,

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shows that the manuscript was passed on to Kairouan; a note by the same hand appears on a B II style fragment (Kairouan, NMIA, R 57).

163 M. Ülker, *Başlangıçtan günümüze Türk hat sanatı*, pp. 105–107.

164 https://digital.staatsbibliothek-berlin.de/werkansicht?PPN=PPN718955803&PHYSID=PHYS_0006&DMDID= (last accessed 6 October 2022). The script seems to tend towards the D I style, especially on f. 10.

165 Mss Cambridge, UL Add. 1143, f. 8 v ; Dublin, CBL Is 1421, f. 2 v–3 r ; Istanbul, TKS, EH 16, f. 38 v–39 r ; Istanbul, TIEM ŞE 47, f. 1 v (voir F. Déroche, Collections de manuscrits anciens du Coran à Istanbul, Rapport préliminaire, in *Etudes médiévales et patrimoine turc*, Cultures et civilisations médiévales 1, J. Sourdel-Thomine ed., Paris, 1983, pp. 147–149, pl. I a and b, fig. 3 and 4).

166 *Manuscripts of the Holy Qur'an from the begining* (sic) *to the fall of Bagdad H656 AD1258*, St. Helier, s.d., vol. of plates, pl. 56 (pp. 112–113).

whereas elsewhere in the manuscript a trunk/column is used – with the exception of the one in s. 32 (f. 5.16 r).

The illumination on f. 1.50 v is therefore not the work of the illuminator (or illuminators) of the original copy. It is part of a series of changes made to the manuscript at an early date. Is it contemporary with the silver verse divisions and sura titles? The exclusive use of gold instead of silver casts doubt on this hypothesis, which has to be discarded since, as T. Stanley noted,

> the only notable difference between the text on the recto and verso of this leaf is the absence of these verse markers from the latter. As the text on the verso was subsequently obliterated by the panel of illumination, it has presumably been preserved in an earlier condition than that on the recto, and this would suggest that the illumination in silver was only added once all the gold work had been completed.[167]

As already suggested by A. George, the addition of this decoration corresponds to the moment when this copy of the Qur'ān was cut into seven volumes, thus transforming a single codex into a series of seven.[168] The single-volume format for the Qur'ān is well attested in the early Abbasid period, as can be seen with the large manuscripts with 12 lines to the page or with Nuruosmaniye 27. Both Nuruosmaniye 27 and the Blue Qur'ān were later cut into several parts, two in the case of the former, seven in the latter. Folios at the junction between two of the volumes thus created (such as the one bearing the decoration) were modified, but certainly textual replacements were also produced to compensate for the loss of text in these places, as is the case at the beginning of Nuruosmaniye 27 in its present state. Remnants of these additions do not seem to have been preserved in the case of the Blue Qur'ān.

There is still a great deal of uncertainty as to whether copies of the Qur'ān in the early Abbasid scripts were single volumes or series of several volumes, especially as the fragmentary state of the material generally makes identification difficult – except when there are only a few lines to the page or when an initial/final folio has been preserved. We have the opinion of Mālik (d. 179/796) who condemned the division of the Book into several volumes,[169] but this provides little more evidence than the existence of this practice in the second/eighth century. In the Kairouan collection, where it was possible to

167 T. Stanley, *The Qur'an and calligraphy*, p. 11.

168 A. George, *Calligraphy*, p. 77.

169 A. Jahdani, Du *fiqh* à la codicologie. Quelques opinions de Mālik (m. 179/796) sur le Coran-codex, *Mélanges de l'Université Saint-Joseph* 56 (2006), Actes de la conférence internationale sur les manuscrits du Coran (Bologne, 26–28 septembre 2002), pp. 274–276.

FIGURE 5.7 Ms Kairouan/Raqqāda, National Museum of Islamic Art, R 57 a, f. 281 v. Final illumination of a D IV copy of the Qur'ān: frame with text (Q. 113: 1–4)
© INP/RAQQĀDA, NMIA

identify nine copies in seven volumes (including the Blue Qur'ān),[170] they do not appear to predate the third/ninth century. Actually, most belong either to that century or to a later date:[171] two are in B II style, one in E I, two in D Vb or similar (one of them in vertical format), four in NS (one of them being in oblong format), and the Blue Qur'ān in D IV. However, these figures tell only part of the story: one of the two B II copies in seven volumes appears to have been divided into seven from a single volume *muṣḥaf* – which means that the Blue Qur'ān is not the only single-volume Qur'ān manuscript to have been transformed into a series of seven volumes. As we shall see later, the multi-volume format may reflect a change in the use of Qur'ān copies.

170 In two cases, it is difficult to decide between a division into seven or fourteen volumes, the latter format obviously deriving from the former.

171 Ms Kairouan/Raqqāda, NMIA, R 167.

It seems, therefore, that during the century that followed its completion, the manuscript underwent transformations: the single volume was cut into seven volumes, full-page decoration was added, followed in a second stage by the silver separation of the verses and their groups as well as the titles of the suras.

6 The Later History of the Manuscript

The tribulations of the manuscript, which was produced in the Near East in the late second/eighth century or beginning of the third/ninth century, may have begun even before the single volume was cut into seven. However, there is currently no direct evidence to suggest either way.

6.1 *From East to West*

The Blue Qurʾān was produced in a major city of the Near East and I have suggested that it might be either Baghdad or Fusṭāṭ. As J. Bloom reminds us, the lustrous ceramic tiles or the teak panels used in the Great Mosque of Kairouan, which probably weighed more than a copy of the Qurʾān, even if it was in seven volumes, made the journey from Baghdad to Kairouan.[172] Such a transfer is not only materially feasible, it fits in with a tradition. Sending a copy of the Qurʾān to distant places was a well-established procedure in the Islamic world from an early date: the example set by caliph ʿUthmān was followed by al-Ḥajjāj b. Yūsuf and later by al-Mahdī, according to our sources.[173] The mobility of Qurʾān manuscripts in the Abbasid world during the second half of the third/ninth century is documented by several deeds associated with copies. In addition to the well-known example of Amājūr, governor of Damascus between 256/870 and 264/878, who sent a Qurʾān in thirty *juzʾ* to Tyre in 262/876,[174] there are two other cases that are more suggestive because they involve longer and riskier journeys. The first one is a copy of the Qurʾān found in Egypt and known through fragments from two of its *juzʾ* (Saint Petersburg, National Library of Russia, Marcel 110; Paris, BnF, Arabe 5178 h); in the Parisian fragment, a note added to the *waqf* deed explains that a high Turkish officer from Samarra, Mūsā b. Bughā (d. 263/877), had entrusted a servant to present the set of thirty volumes as a *waqf* in Tulunid Egypt. Difficulties apparently arose and the man was forced to deposit it as a *waqf* in Alexandria.[175] A slightly later example

172 J. Bloom, The Blue Koran revisited, p. 206.

173 In the case of al-Mahdī, we may still have the large manuscripts he sent (see F. Déroche, Twenty leaves, pp. 57–77; id., Of volumes and skins, pp. 146–172).

174 F. Déroche, *The Qurʾān of Amāǧūr*, *Manuscripts of the Middle East* 5 (1990–1991), pp. 59–66.

175 F. Déroche, Un fragmento coranico, pp. 127–139; id., The Caliph, his mawla and the mushaf, pp. 240–246.

(Istanbul fragment, TIEM ŞE 5) provides information on another copy in which the name of Badr (d. 289/902), son of a freedman of al-Mutawakkil and commander-in-chief of the armies under al-Muʿtaḍid (r. 279/892–289/902), appears.[176] This is again a copy in thirty *juz'* that Badr had deposited as a *waqf* in the Great Mosque of Damascus at a time when the city was still in Tulunid hands. It is highly doubtful that these huge and expensive copies of the Qur'ān[177] were prepared by a team of copyists and illuminators sent to places that were not under the direct control of the Abbasid caliphate. Mūsā b. Bughā's set actually illustrates the difficulties faced by these undertakings. Because the manuscripts were official gifts involving – indirectly – the caliph, we can safely assume that the volumes were prepared in the centre of the empire and then sent to provincial cities. Unlike the previous examples, the Blue Qur'ān did not keep any deed or note that would document such moves – and help us to answer more precisely the question of its origins.

In addition to these observations on the movement of Qur'ān manuscripts, it should be noted that *maṣāḥif*, i.e., copies in one volume, are involved in the earlier instances, from ʿUthmān to al-Mahdī, but in the second half of the third/ninth century they are all multi-volume copies. Similarly, a glance at the medieval collection of Qur'ān copies in the Great Mosque of Kairouan reveals that of the 66 items described in the 693/1294 inventory, 51 are series of 2 to 60 volumes;[178] the bulk of these appear to date, as far as I have been able to ascertain, from the third/ninth century or later. This contrasts with the situation I believe I can discern at an earlier date, when single-volume Qur'āns dominate among copies intended for collective use, i.e., those that could be presented as a *waqf* to religious institutions.[179] In other words, the Blue Qur'ān was transformed from one volume to seven to conform to the format of the copies of the Qur'ān for communal use that became prevalent in the course of the third/ninth century. Full-page illuminations were added to the volumes, in some of them hiding parts of the text which was superfluous (as on f. 1.50 v). At some point, the silver verse dividers and sura titles were added, when the seven volumes were still together.

6.2 *A Complex Path*

How did the Blue Qur'ān reach Kairouan from the Near East? Was the manuscript sent there shortly after it was produced, or at a later date? Was it still

176 F. Déroche, Collections de manuscrits anciens du Coran, pp. 154–155, pl. IV a.

177 See F. Déroche, Format et coût des livres.

178 F. Déroche, A note on the mediaeval inventory, p. 77 (there are 3 copies in a single volume and 12 which are presumably series, but it is not possible to define their type).

179 F. Déroche, *Qur'ans of the Umayyads*, pp. 107–133.

a single-volume copy, or was it already a series of seven volumes? Before I examine these issues, the later history of the Blue Qurʾān has to be taken into account.

As J. Bloom had already observed, the existence of the first seventh was different from that of the rest, its folios essentially supplying the art market. His initial assumption was that the first volume passed into Ottoman hands after the conquest of Tunisia;[180] he has since changed his mind and believes that only a handful of folios made it to Istanbul, the bulk of the manuscript remaining in Tunisia until the mid-twentieth century.[181] Actually, nothing of the first volume survives in Kairouan. Moreover, its general state of preservation is better than that of the rest of the Blue Qurʾān: the "survival rate" is higher, since 50 of its folios are known,[182] as against 74 for the other six volumes.[183] All of them are intact, whereas several of those in Kairouan/Raqqada are in poor condition, a sign that the conditions of conservation over the long term have been different.

These remarks show the importance of a better understanding of the history of this exceptional manuscript. Some light can now be shed on the final stages. At a recent auction, a London art dealer informed prospective buyers that he had acquired ten folios from another dealer in 1979, who had received them in his turn from an unnamed owner who had acquired them from F. Martin (see Quotation p. 173). The latter, he added, had bought them (along with other folios, but the number is not specified) in Istanbul, where they were rumoured to be part of a copy formerly deposited in Mashhad by the Safavid Shāh ʿAbbās (r. 996/1588–1038/1629). His testimony thus differs on this point from that of F. Martin, who mentioned al-Maʾmūn and his father Hārūn al-Rashīd; but it was perhaps the Swedish collector's intention to increase the commercial value of the folios in his possession by relating the Blue Qurʾān to the prestigious figures of the Abbasid caliphs. In addition, the London art dealer still had the previously mentioned binding in his possession:[184] a photograph shows that it was a portfolio, which in all likelihood dates from the late tenth/sixteenth

180 J. Bloom, The Blue Koran. An early Fatimid manuscript from the Maghrib, *Les manuscrits du Moyen-Orient. Essais de codicologie et de paléographie*, F. Déroche ed., Istanbul-Paris, 1989, p. 97.

181 J. Bloom, The Blue Koran revisited, p. 205.

182 That is 40% of the total known folios.

183 According to the modern inventory, 65 folios are in Tunisia (eventually divided between Kairouan and the Bardo), but I could collect information about only 64. A further 10 folios from these six volumes are scattered in collections outside Tunisia. The total is, however, close to the figure given by M. al-Nayyāl (see above), i.e., 60% of what we know.

184 Christie's, 9 November 1977, n° 66: "fine sixteenth-century tooled Morocco binding from Persia, obviously … for a section of the same Qur'an"; J. Bloom, The Blue Koran, p. 97; id., The Blue Koran revisited, p. 205.

or early eleventh/seventeenth century and could be a Persian production (fig. 5.8).[185] This material detail lends weight to the rumour associating this part of the manuscript with Shāh ʿAbbās and more broadly with Iran. The document also included a list of those who had previously acquired folios from this batch of ten folios.

To these indications, which largely overlap with what F. Martin had written a century earlier, can be added other elements that point in the same direction and invite us to reconsider the links that exist between the Blue Qur'ān and Iran. First, we note the presence in the collections of the Golestan Museum in Tehran of two folios of the manuscript (f. 1.21 and 1.22). The Iranian customs stamp on the folio (f. 1.18) now in Cambridge (Mass.) had been interpreted by J. Bloom as a possible addition by F. Martin to give consistency to his account; the folio could, however, simply have been stamped in the course of an export-license procedure. Finally, according to the testimony of good connoisseurs of the Iranian art market, it was possible in the 1960s to acquire folios of the manuscript in Tehran. Conversely, the testimony of al-Nayyāl shows that there were only 75 folios in Kairouan at the beginning of the 1960s, which represent together those that are in Tunisia today and those from the second to the seventh volume that have passed through the art market.[186] The movements of the Blue Qur'ān are therefore more complex than what was thought. The first volume of the series was separated from the others at some point and went to Iran. The question is when.

The medieval inventory of Kairouan allows us to know that the Blue Qur'ān was in Tunisia at the latest in 693/1294, perhaps even as early as 530/1135.[187] On the other hand, the binding of the first seventh suggests that it was in Iran in the early eleventh/seventeenth century. However, the transfer to Iran did not necessarily take place during the three-century interval between 693/1294 and the early eleventh/seventeenth century. Indeed, the seven volumes may not all have reached Tunisia: the mutilated text of the inventory leaves some doubt as

185 The decoration on the boards consists of a NA-type plate stamped between two pendants, all on a gilded background (see F. Déroche, *Catalogue des manuscrits arabes. Du Maghreb à l'Insulinde*, pp. 15–26; F. Déroche *et al.*, *Manuel de codicologie*, pp. 320–325). The oblong format did not influence the bookbinder, who arranged the decoration along the horizontal axis as he would have done for a book of vertical format. I have not been able to obtain information on the thickness of the spine that would give an idea of the number of leaves that were originally kept within this binding.

186 In other words, f. 3.5, 3.7, 4.3, 4.8, 5.1, 5.2, 5.11, 5.12, 6.5 and 6.6 – the origin of which is therefore questionable, as J. Bloom points out, but he thinks too big since in his view the first seventh was also in Kairouan (J. Bloom, The Blue Koran revisited, p. 205). We have identified only 74 folios, but it is possible, for example, that a folio circulating on the art market did not pass through a public sale and therefore left no trace.

187 See above and n. 16.

to whether the entire set was ever present. Many of the other series mentioned in the inventory are actually described as incomplete and information in this connection may have been provided at the beginning of the entry, now lost, about the Blue Qurʾān.[188] At least two scenarios taking place after the manuscript was produced, either in Iraq or in Egypt, are therefore possible, each with variants: the removal of the first seventh volume may have taken place before the rest of the series reached Kairouan, or once the whole set was in that city.

As we have seen, the silver ornaments were added when the Blue Qurʾān was already a copy in seven volumes, but when the latter were still together: otherwise the first volume would not have them. The changes it underwent and the tendency discernible in the above examples to present copies of the Qurʾān in several volumes as *waqf* lead me to assume that the Blue Qurʾān was brought to Kairouan when it had already been cut into seven volumes. The type of the silver ten-verses roundels is compatible with a date by the end of the third/ninth century. Were they added to the manuscript in Kairouan? The quality of the work seems more consonant with that of Near Eastern workshops.

A first scenario would imply that, once the silver ornaments and titles were finished, the manuscript was sent to Ifriqiya during the reign of one of the last Aghlabids (i.e., before 296/909), either from Baghdad or from Egypt. At that moment, the manuscript was probably still complete, which entails that the first volume was taken later to Iran from Kairouan. I would rather suggest another scenario: the manuscript, produced either in Baghdad or in Egypt, was taken from Cairo to Kairouan during the eighty years which elapsed between the transfer of the Fatimid caliphate to Egypt (362/972) and the rupture of the Zirids with their overlords (440/1049).[189] Several third/ninth century Qurʾān manuscripts that are nowadays preserved in Kairouan seem to have been brought from the East at that time, and some of these old copies were presented as *waqf* by members of the ruling Zirid family in the first half of the fifth/eleventh century.[190] Their aesthetics are in sharp contrast with the contemporary production of Qurʾān manuscripts,[191] including in Kairouan the

188 See I. Chabbouh, Sijill, p. 347, no 12 and 13, for instance.

189 The first attacks of the Fatimids against Egypt in 301/914–302/915, then 306/919–309/921 or 324/936, were probably the occasion of some looting, but they are unlikely to have been the occasion of the removal of the manuscript to Kairouan since they concerned Alexandria and minor cities of Egypt and did not reach Fusṭāṭ.

190 See F. Déroche, *Qurʾans of the Umayyads*, p. 13. For his part, J. Bloom considers only the Aghlabid period for such a transfer (J. Bloom, The Blue Koran revisited, p. 206).

191 The contributions by A. Karame and M. Karimi Nia in this volume provide a good sample of the Qurʾān manuscript production during the fourth/tenth and fifth/eleventh centuries and show the dominance of Ns scripts on vertical format, as well as the progression of the "modern" system for the short vowels and orthoepic marks.

well-documented "Qur'ān of the Nurse" completed in that city in 420/1020.[192] Within the frame of this "archaeological" interest in outmoded manuscripts, the Blue Qur'ān could well have found its place. This could also be the moment when the first volume made its way to Iran: the links between Fatimid Egypt and Iran at that time are illustrated by Naṣer-e Khosrow and Mu'ayyad Shīrāzī Salmānī.[193] A fellow countryman visiting Cairo at an earlier date may have taken the beautiful but outdated volume back with him to Iran while the rest went to Kairouan.

> … He [a first unnamed art dealer in London] … acquired his leaves from somebody who had acquired them from F.R. Martin who bought them when he was in Istanbul. The legend was that these leaves were once sent by Shah Abbas the First to the Shrine in Mashhad, with a special folder made for the leaves.
>
> When these were acquired [in 1979 by the author of the letter] from [the first unnamed art dealer] there were ten leaves, in the folder with cut arabesques, as found on Quran bindings, only this was much larger and made to fit the pages in terms of size. This folder appears to be of the 16th or 17th century and is in the typical Ottoman/Persian style of the period…
> Other folios that came out of this same folder are:
>
> (1) A double page with … (The Furusiyya Art Foundation) (2 pages)
> (2) A Folio with Sadruddin Aga Khan Collection (now in Canada)
> (3) The Dauphin collection
> (4) A double folio with the Sarikhani Collection (2 pages)
> (5) One sold to Jones of Quaritch
> (6) One with Sotheby's currently
> (7) A double folio with … family (2 pages)

Quotation from a letter sent on October 21st, 2019 by a London art trader on the occasion of the sale at Sotheby's on October 23rd, 2019 (lot 107).

192 F. Déroche, Le prince et la nourrice, *Journal of Qur'anic studies* 19 (2017), Qur'anic manuscripts in the Western Islamic world, N. de Castilla ed., pp. 18–33.

193 [Nāṣer-e Khosraw], *Sefer Nameh. Relation du voyage de Nassiri Khosrau en Syrie, en Palestine, en Egypte, en Arabie et en Perse pendant les années 437–444* (*1035–1042*), ed. and trans. Ch. Schefer, Paris, 1881. Nāṣer-e Khosraw states the he went to "Kairouan" (*ibid.*, p. 160).

FIGURE 5.8 "Binding" of the first seventh of the Blue Qur'ān (early eleventh/seventeenth century)
© PRIVATE COLLECTION

7 Conclusion

Have the mysteries of the Blue Qur'ān been solved? The complex history of the manuscript, reflected in the two contradictory attributions of the 1976 exhibition, is far from being completely known, as the preceding lines have shown, but the new elements that have been taken into consideration here should allow us to move forward on a clearer basis. Turning my back on approaches that have been influenced by the fact that part of the Blue Qur'ān was preserved in North Africa, I have attempted to find in the manuscript itself answers to the fundamental questions it poses, those of its place and date of production.

On the first point, the punctuation of the *fā'* and *qāf* and the *qirā'a* (text and verse division) provide a clear answer: the copy was made in the Near East. It would be surprising if a copyist (not to speak of a team of copyists) had come to the western part of the Mediterranean to copy this manuscript when we have precise information that goes in the other direction and shows that at that time high-quality Qur'āns were sent from one place to another. Then, why would he (they) have produced a copy that did not meet local requirements? Two cities seem to me to have had the resources for the production of the manuscript, Baghdad and Fusṭāṭ, but strong arguments or points of comparison that would allow us to decide in favour of one or the other are lacking.

In order to determine the date of production, it is important to place the features of the manuscript in a wider context. Other Qur'ān manuscripts copied in D IV style share some of them with the Blue Qur'ān: they can be defined as archaic, mainly in the fields of orthography, illumination and format. This contextualisation of the manuscript supports a dating to the early third/ninth century, or even to the very end of the previous one, based on the analysis of orthography and illumination. There is no doubt that scientific analysis of the material of the Blue Qur'ān for the purposes of dating or identifying its various components will provide further details that will complete the small number of elements we have to date it.

The significance of the manuscript is still difficult to appreciate, as J. Bloom rightly remarked.[194] There is no doubt that it has established itself today as one of the most impressive Qur'ān manuscripts of the first centuries of Islam. Is this enough to make it an imperial commission? This line of enquiry has been followed by various commentators. However, some material elements, for example the blue colour, as J. Bloom also pointed out, or the relatively modest quantity of parchment used, invite us to broaden our reflection and

194 J. Bloom, The Blue Koran revisited, p. 214.

to try to appreciate the initial project in a more global understanding of the Blue Qurʾān.

Its transformation into a series of seven volumes shows in any case that it quickly ceased to correspond to the needs that it was meant to meet. The changes that were made would be in keeping with the evolution that can be discerned in favour of multivolume copies during the third/ninth century and would therefore have taken place during this period, perhaps towards the end of that century. It is in any case not an isolated example, and other copies of the Qurʾān have been refurbished along the same lines. The full-page decoration is clearly linked to this modification, since its primary function was to hide a text that now belonged to the second volume of the series. The other changes, which concern the verse divisions and the titles of the suras, were made subsequently.

The Blue Qurʾān represents an extreme case of the scattering that affects early Qurʾān manuscripts. But while this usually occurred at a late date, we have here one of the few examples where it affected a manuscript as early as the Middle Ages. It is now clear that the first volume was separated from the rest and reached Iran. The few elements we have at our disposal allow us to offer only hypotheses on the road it followed. The separation itself suggests that the exceptional character of the manuscript, which may not have been immediately appreciated (if the absence of another similar Qurʾān can be seen as a proof of this), was subsequently perceived and made it a desirable object. The combination of gold and blue, which has given rise in the scientific literature to suggestive remarks, no doubt did not fail to strike those who had occasion to see it, perhaps Shāh ʿAbbās himself, if we give credence to the information reported above.

Appendix 1

List of the Folios

The foliation used here takes into account the oldest testimony we have, that of the medieval inventory of Kairouan, dated 693/1294 but possibly reflecting a state of affairs going back at least to [5]30/1135: according to this text, the Blue Qurʾān was in the shape of a series of seven volumes. The folios known to us are thus numbered separately for each volume. The first digit, from 1 to 7, corresponds to the volume; after a dot, a second number is that of the folio,

according to its place within the sequence in the volume concerned. "f. 2.4" means f. 4 in vol. 2 and "f. 4.19" is f. 19 in vol. 4.[195]

f. xx [2]: verification of the text on both sides of the folios has been possible.
f. xx*: verification of the text of the folio has not been possible, or only partly.
(a): bifolio (the two folios are indicated with the same letter, see for instance f. 1.15 and 1.16 or 3.4 and 3.8).

First volume:

1)	1.1 = 2: 20–26[2]	Farjam Coll. C 753[196]
2)	1.2 = 2: 26–30*	Private coll.[197]
3)	1.3 = 2: 33–42*	Doha, Museum of Islamic Art, Ms.8.2006[198]
4)	1.4 = 2: 60–65[2]	Dublin, Chester Beatty Library, Ms 1405A[199]
5)	1.5 = 2: 65–74[2]	Dublin, Chester Beatty Library, Ms 1405B[200]
6)	1.6 = 2: 74–81[2]	Private coll.[201]
7)	1.7 = 2: 93–101[2]	Dublin, Chester Beatty Library, Ms 1405A[202]
8)	1.8 = 2: 105–113[2]	Seattle, Art Museum 69.37[203]

195 The bibliography of the folios that have been reproduced is deliberately kept to a minimum.

196 Sotheby's, 23 October 2019, lot 107. In a letter dated 21 October 2019 (see the quotation on p. 173), the art dealer stated that he had in his hands 10 sheets, 6 of which were actually 3 bifolios. He therefore lists 7 lots. Since we were unable to obtain information on the passages present in each case, we propose 5 equivalences with a varying degree of confidence. At the end of this operation, we were unable to identify a bifolio (lot no. 7) and a folio (lot no. 3); they are therefore part of the fragments of the Blue Qur'ān that do not appear in this list (or appear under another origin).

197 Christie's, 25 November 1985, lot 83.

198 https://www.sothebys.com/en/auctions/ecatalogue/2006/arts-of-the-islamic-world-l06222/lot.3.html.

199 https://viewer.cbl.ie/viewer/image/Is_1405A/1/ et https://viewer.cbl.ie/viewer/image/Is_1405A/2/.

200 I thank Dr. M. Carey for the information on this folio.

201 Christie's, 25 October 2018, lot 1; https://www.christies.com/en/lot/lot-6162814.

202 https://viewer.cbl.ie/viewer/image/Is_1405A/3/ and https://viewer.cbl.ie/viewer/image/Is_1405A/4/.

203 https://art.seattleartmuseum.org/objects/5815/folio-from-the-dispersed-blue-quran;jsessionid=2D7577A0C6DFE606A719047893641E42?ctx=abeec92a-65e7-4587-8cde-66f7664049ab&idx=34. I thank Ms E. Smith for the information on this folio.

9)	1.9 = 2: 120–127[2]	Khalili Coll., KFQ53[204]
10)	1.10 = 2: 148–155[2]	Toronto, Aga Khan Museum, 248[205]
11)	1.11 =: 2: 164–171[2]	Coll. al-Thani, ATC244[206]
12)	1.12 = 2: 178–183*	Private coll.[207]
13)	1.13 = 2: 183–187*	Private coll.[208]
14)	1.14 = 2: 187–194[2]	Copenhagen, David Collection, 6.1.77-2004[209]
15)	1.15 = 2: 194–198* (a)	Shaykh al-Ard Coll.[210]
16)	1.16 = 2: 198–206* (a)	idem
17)	1.17 = 2: 218–221*	Private coll.[211]
18)	1.18 = 2: 229–233[2]	Cambridge (Mass.), Arthur M. Sackler Museum, 1967.23[212]
19)	1.19 = 2: 234–237*	Denver, Art Museum, BJ Averitt IAF 1999.78[213]
20)	1.20 = 2: 237–241*	Private coll.[214]
21)	1.21 = 2: 253–258[2] (b)	Tehran, Golestan Museum[215]
22)	1.22 = 2: 258–261[2] (b)	idem
23)	1.23 = 2: 261–267[2]	Lygo Coll., cat. 27[216]
24)	1.24 = 2: 267–273*	Kuala Lumpur, MF 267–73[217]
25)	1.25 = 2: 281–282*	Private coll.[218]
26)	1.26 = 2: 282–286*	Private coll.[219]

204 https://www.khalilicollections.org/collections/islamic-art/khalili-collections-islamic-art-two-folios-from-the-blue-quran-kfq53/ also https://corpuscoranicum.de/de/verse-navigator/sura/2/verse/125/manuscripts/1028.

205 I thank Dr. M. Chagnon for the information on this folio and on AKM477.

206 *Trésors de la collection Al Thani à l'Hôtel de la Marine*, Paris, 2021, pp. 218–219.

207 Sotheby's, 15 October 1997, lot 6.

208 Sotheby's, 23 April 1997, lot 41.

209 https://www.davidmus.dk/en/collections/islamic/materials/calligraphy/art/77-2004.

210 *Calligraphie islamique, Textes sacrés et profanes. Islamic calligraphy, Sacred and secular* writings, Geneva, 1988, p. 58, n° 4.

211 Christie's, 10 October 1989, lot 303.

212 https://harvardartmuseums.org/collections/object/201790.

213 https://www.denverartmuseum.org/en/object/1999.78 (one side only); according to M. Fraser, the recto starts at Q 2: 231.

214 D. Roxburgh, *Writing the word of God. Calligraphy and the Qur'ân*, Houston, 2007, pp. 17–21, fig. 8 et ill. p. 12.

215 I thank Dr. M. Karimi-Nia for the information on these folios.

216 W. Kwiatkowski, *Pages of the Qur'an. The Lygo collection*, London (2015), pp. 54–57, n° 27.

217 Sotheby's, 4 October 2011, lot 2; https://www.sothebys.com/en/auctions/ecatalogue/2011/arts-of-the-islamic-world-evening-sale-l11229/lot.2.html.

218 Pierre Bergé & Associés, *Vente Archéologie, Arts d'Orient, Extrême-Orient*, 27–28 octobre 2006, lot 145, pp. 34–35.

219 Christie's, 27 April 2017, lot 19; https://www.christies.com/lot/lot-6065364?ldp_breadcrumb=back&intObjectID=6065364&from=salessummary&lid=1.

27)	1.27 = 3: 1–9*	Doha, Arab Museum of Modern Art, Arabic Calligraphy coll.[220]
28)	1.28 = 3: 17–24*	Private coll.[221]
29)	1.29 = 3: 24–31*	Private coll.[222]
30)	1.30 = 3: 31–39*	Private coll.[223]
31)	1.31 = 3: 39–47[2]	Abu Dhabi, Louvre Abu Dhabi, LAD 2014.006[224]
32)	1.32 = 3: 47–55[2]	Boston, Museum of Fine Arts, 33.686[225]
33)	1.33 = 3: 55–64[2]	Khalili Coll., KFQ53
34)	1.34 = 3: 79–82*	Private coll.[226]
35)	1.35 = 3: 91–96*	Private coll.[227]
36)	1.36 = 3: 127–137[2]	Private coll.[228]
37)	1.37 = 3 : 157–165*	Kota Batu, Brunei Museum
38)	1.38 = 3: 165–174*	Private coll.[229]
39)	1.39 = 3: 174–181[2] (c)	Hamid Jafar Coll.
40)	1.40 = 3: 181–188*	Private coll.[230]
41)	1.41 = 3: 188–195*	Private coll.[231]
42)	1.42 = 3: 195–4 : 2[2] (c)	Hamid Jafar Coll.
43)	1.43 = 4: 8–12[2]	Paris, Institut du monde arabe, AC 84-09[232]
44)	1.44 = 4: 12–17[2]	Private coll.[233]
45)	1.45 = 4: 17–23*	Private coll.[234]
46)	1.46 = 4: 23–25[2]	Los Angeles, LACMA, M.86.196[235]

220 *Manuscripts of the Holy Qur'an*, vol. of plates, pl. 54 (pp. 108–109).
221 Christie's, 27 April 2017, lot 18; https://www.christies.com/lot/lot-6065363?ldp_breadcrumb=back&intObjectID=6065363&from=salessummary&lid=1.
222 Christie's, 19 October 1993, lot 35.
223 Sotheby's, 15 October 1998, lot 8.
224 https://www.louvreabudhabi.ae/fr/explore/highlights-of-the-collection/Page-of-the-Blue-Quran.
225 https://collections.mfa.org/objects/17897.
226 Christie's, 16 June 1986, lot 56.
227 Sotheby's, 15 October 1984, lot 220.
228 Sotheby's, 22 May 1986, lot 243.
229 Sotheby's, 22 October 1993, lot 32.
230 Sotheby's (Geneva), 25 June 1985, lot 11.
231 Sotheby's, 12 October 2000, lot 5.
232 http://expositions.bnf.fr/islam/grand/isl_126.htm.
233 Sotheby's, 22 April 2015, lot 62; https://www.sothebys.com/en/auctions/ecatalogue/2015/arts-islamic-world-l15220/lot.62.html; Christie's, 26 April 2012, lot 39; https://www.christies.com/en/lot/lot-5551207.
234 Sotheby's, 15 October 1998, lot 7.
235 https://collections.lacma.org/node/252330.

47)	1.47 = 4: 37–44* (d)	Sarikhan Coll. I.MS.1024[236]
48)	1.48 = 4: 44–51* (d)	idem
49)	1.49 = 4: 51–59[2]	New York, Brooklyn Museum, 1995.51a–b[237]
50)	1.50 = 4: 59–62*	Private coll.[238]

Second volume:

51)	2.1 = 5: 68–75[2]	Kairouan/Raqqāda NMIA, R 197
52)	2.2 = 5: 75–85[2]	Kairouan/Raqqāda NMIA, R 197
53)	2.3 = 6: 19–29[2] (e)	Kairouan/Raqqāda NMIA, R 197
54)	2.4 = 6: 48–57[2] (e)	Kairouan/Raqqāda NMIA, R 197
55)	2.5 = 7: 130–138[2]	Kairouan/Raqqāda NMIA, R 197
56)	2.6 = 7: 138–145[2]	Kairouan/Raqqāda NMIA, R 197

Third volume:

57)	3.1 = 9: 49–59[2]	Kairouan/Raqqāda NMIA, R 197
58)	3.2 = 11: 47–55[2]	Kairouan/Raqqāda NMIA, R 197
59)	3.3 = 12: 13–21[2]	Kairouan/Raqqāda NMIA, R 197
60)	3.4 = 12: 108–13: 3[2] (f)	Kairouan/Raqqāda NMIA, R 197
61)	3.5 = 13: 3–10[2] (g)	Private coll.[239]
62)	3.6 = 13: 16–23[2]	Kairouan/Raqqāda NMIA, R 197
63)	3.7 = 13: 23–31[2] (g)	Londres, The Arcadian Group, s.n[240]
64)	3.8 = 13: 31–37[2] (f)	Kairouan/Raqqāda NMIA, R 197
65)	3.9 = 14: 44–52 (h)*	Tunis, Bardo Museum no 01060742[241]
66)	3.10 = 15: 1–22 (h)*	idem

Fourth volume:

67)	4.1 = 16: 37–48[2] (i)	Kairouan/Raqqāda NMIA, R 197
68)	4.2 = 16: 48–61[2]	Kairouan/Raqqāda NMIA, R 197

236 *The Sarikhani collection. An introduction*, London, s.d., pp. 30–33; also M. Fraser, The origins, ill. 1 and p. 198.

237 https://www.brooklynmuseum.org/opencollection/objects/153526.

238 T. Stanley, *The Qur'an and calligraphy*, no 14, pp. 108–109, fig. p. 65; *Manuscripts of the Holy Qur'an*, vol. of plates, pl. 56 (pp. 112–113).

239 T. Stanley, *The Qur'an and calligraphy*, n° 12, p. 107, fig. p. 62–63; *Manuscripts of the Holy Qur'an*, vol. of plates, pl. 58 (p. 116–117); Y. Dhannūn, al-Maṣāḥif al-karīma wa-khuṭūṭuhā mundhu ʿaṣr al-risāla wa-ḥattā al-waqt al-hāḍir, *Rewaq* 0 (june 2015), pl. 4 (with a misidentification of the Qur'ān text present on the folio).

240 As in the previous note.

241 I thank Prof. Kh. Kchir who provided me with information on the text present on the folios kept in the Bardo Museum (f. 3.9, 3.10, 5.8, 5.13 et 5.14).

69)	4.3 = 16: 61–70[2]	Private coll.[242]
70)	4.4 = 16: 70–77[2] (i)	Kairouan/Raqqāda NMIA, R 197
71)	4.5 = 17: 12–21[2]	Kairouan/Raqqāda NMIA, R 197
72)	4.6 = 17: 21–31[2]	Kairouan/Raqqāda NMIA, R 197
73)	4.7 = 17: 101–111[2]	Kairouan/Raqqāda NMIA, R 197
74)	4.8 = 18: 1–14*	Private coll.[243]
75)	4.9 = 18: 14–20[2] (j)	Kairouan/Raqqāda NMIA, R 197
76)	4.10 = 18: 20–28[2] (k)	Kairouan/Raqqāda NMIA, R 197
77)	4.11 = 18: 28–37[2] (l)	Kairouan/Raqqāda NMIA, R 197
78)	4.12 = 18: 37–48[2] (m)	Kairouan/Raqqāda NMIA, R 197
79)	4.13 = 18: 48–56[2] (m)	idem
80)	4.14 = 18: 56–68[2] (l)	Kairouan/Raqqāda NMIA, R 197
81)	4.15 = 18: 68–81[2] (k)	Kairouan/Raqqāda NMIA, R 197
82)	4.16 = 18: 81–94[2] (j)	Kairouan/Raqqāda NMIA, R 197
83)	4.17 = 18: 94–107[2]	Kairouan/Raqqāda NMIA, R 197
84)	4.18 = 19: 26–39[2] (n)	Kairouan/Raqqāda NMIA, R 197
85)	4.19 = 19: 39–54[2] (n)	idem
86)	4.20 = 19: 54–66[2]	Kairouan/Raqqāda NMIA, R 197
87)	4.21 = 19: 66–79[2]	Kairouan/Raqqāda NMIA, R 197
88)	4.22 = 19: 80–20: 1[2] (o)	Kairouan/Raqqāda NMIA, R 197
89)	4.23 = 20: 2–22[2] (o)	idem
90)	4.24 = 20: 61–73[2]	Kairouan/Raqqāda NMIA, R 197
91)	4.25 = 22: 71–78[2]	Kairouan/Raqqāda NMIA, R 197

Fifth volume:

92)	5.1 = 25: 48–60 (p)	Toronto, Aga Khan Museum, AKM477[244]
93)	5.2 = 26: 52–78 (p)	idem
94)	5.3 = 26: 180–202[2] (q)	Kairouan/Raqqāda NMIA, R 197
95)	5.4 = 27: 34–42[2] (q)	idem
96)	5.5 = 28: 72–79[2] (r)	Kairouan/Raqqāda NMIA, R 197
97)	5.6 = 28: 79–86[2] (s)	Kairouan/Raqqāda NMIA, R 197
98)	5.7 = 29: 9–17[2]	Kairouan/Raqqāda NMIA, R 197
99)	5.8 = 29: 17–26*	Tunis, Bardo Museum

242 Sotheby's, 27 October 2020, lot 404; https://www.sothebys.com/en/buy/auction/2020/arts-of-the-islamic-world-india-including-fine-rugs-and-carpets/a-large-quran-leaf-in-gold-kufic-script-on-blue.

243 T. Stanley, *The Qur'an and calligraphy*, n° 13, p. 108, fig. p. 64; *Manuscripts of the Holy Qur'an*, vol. of plates, pl. 57 (pp. 114–115).

244 *Chefs d'œuvre islamiques*, Paris-Milan, 2007, pp. 108–109 (reproduction of the open bifolio). On f. 5.2 v, the text stops at the initial *alif* of Q 26:78.

100) 5.9 = 29: 34–43^2 (s) Kairouan/Raqqāda NMIA, R 197
101) 5.10 = 29: 43–51^2 (r) Kairouan/Raqqāda NMIA, R 197
102) 5.11 = 29: 51–56* Bahreyn, Bayt al-Qur'an[245]
103) 5.12 = 30: 24–32^2 New York, Metropolitan Museum, 2004-88[246]
104) 5.13 = 30: 32–41* Tunis, Bardo Museum[247]
105) 5.14 = 30: 41–48* Tunis, Bardo Museum
106) 5.15 = 30: 48–58^2 Kairouan/Raqqāda NMIA, R 197
107) 5.16 = 31: 33–32: 10^2 (t) Kairouan/Raqqāda NMIA, R 197
108) 5.17 = 33: 31–36^2 (t) idem

Sixth volume:

109) 6.1 = 34: 48–35: 4^2 Kairouan/Raqqāda NMIA, R 197
110) 6.2 = 36: 74–37: 8^2 Kairouan/Raqqāda NMIA, R 197
111) 6.3 = 38: 22–28^2 Kairouan/Raqqāda NMIA, R 197
112) 6.4 = 41: 31–43^2 Kairouan/Raqqāda NMIA, R 197
113) 6.5 = 42: 13–16* Private coll.[248]
114) 6.6 = 42: 16–23* Private coll.[249]
115) 6.7 = 43: 48–63^2 (u) Kairouan/Raqqāda NMIA, R 197
116) 6.8 = 43: 63–80^2 (u) idem
117) 6.9 = 43: 81–44: 10^2 (v) Kairouan/Raqqāda NMIA, R 197
118) 6.10 = 44: 11–35^2 (v) idem

Seventh volume:

119) 7.1 = 49: 10–15^2 Kairouan/Raqqāda NMIA, R 197
120) 7.2 = 52: 32–53: 1^2 (w) Kairouan/Raqqāda NMIA, R 197
121) 7.3 = 53: 1–27^2 (w) idem
122) 7.4 = 55: 18–41^2 (x) Kairouan/Raqqāda NMIA, R 197
123) 7.5 = 57: 13–20^2 (x) idem
124) 7.6 = 72: 6–[19]^2 Kairouan/Raqqāda NMIA, R 197

245 https://corpuscoranicum.de/fr/manuscripts/1928/page/1r?sura=29&verse=51.
246 https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/454662?deptids=14&high=on&ft=*&offset=40&rpp=40&pos=78.
247 F. 5.14 r is reproduced in al-Nayyal (Q 30: 41–45).
248 Sotheby's, 13 April 1976, lot 237.
249 Y. Tabbaa, *The transformation*, fig. 17.

Appendix 2

Original Verse Count. Ten-Verse Numbers in abjad

Folio	In the ms, verse no	Kufan equivalent	Comments[a]
1.1 r	2: 20	21	All except K
1.6 v	2: 80	81	All except K
1.8 v	2: 110	111	All except K
1.12 r	2: 180	180	K, B
1.16 r	2: 200	201	K, B
1.18 v	2: 230	231	B, Sa
1.22 v	2: 260	259	B
1.28 v	3: 20	20	K, B, M, Md, G
1.29 v	3: 30	30	K, B, M, Md, G
1.31 r	3: 40	40	K, B, M, Md, G
1.36 r	3: 130	130	All
1.39 v	3: 180	180	All
1.45 v	4: 20	20	All
1.47 r	4: 40	40	All
2.2 r	5: 80	77	B
2.3 r	6: 20	20	K, B, S
2.4 r	6: 50	50	K, B, S
2.5 r	7: 130	131	B, S, M, Md
2.6 r	7: 140	141	B, S
3.1 r	9: 50	49	Ba, Bb, D, H
3.2 r	11: 50	50	All
3.3 v	12: 20	20	All
3.4 r	12: 110	110	All
3.5 v	13: 10	9	All except K
3.6 r	13: 20	17	Unknown
3.7 r	13: 30	26	Unknown
4.2 r	16: 50	50	All
4.2 v	16: 60	60	All
4.4 r	16: 70	70	All
4.5 v	17: 20	20	All
4.6 v	17: 30	30	All
4.7 v	17: 110	111	All except K
4.10 r	18: 20	21	S
4.11 r	18: 30	29	Unknown

cont.

Folio	In the ms, verse no	Kufan equivalent	Comments
4.12 r	18: 40	40	K, B
4.13 r	18: 50	50	K, B
4.14 r	18: 60	60	K, B
4.15 r	18: 70	70	K, B
4.15 v	18: 80	80	K, B
4.16 v	18: 90	89	B
4.17 v	18: 100	99	B
4.19 r	19: 40	41	All except K
4.21 r	19: 70	71	B, S, I
4.23 r	20: 10	11	All except K
4.23 v	20: 20	21	All except K
4.24 r	20: 60	63	B
5.2 r	26: 60	60	All
5.3 r	26: 180	181	B
5.3 v	26: 190	191	B
	26: 200	201	B
5.4 v	27: 40	40	K, B, S
5.6 r	28: 80	80	All
5.7 r	29: 10	11	All except K
5.9 v	29: 40	41	B, D
5.11 r	29: 50	51	B, D
5.14 v	30: 30	30	K, B, S
5.15 r	30: 50	50	K, B, S
6.1 r	34: 50	50	All except S
6.2 v	36: 80	81	All except K
6.4 r	41: 30	32	B, S
6.4 v	41: 40	42	B, S
6.7 r	43: 50	51	All except K
6.7 v	43: 60	61	S
6.8 v	43: 70	71	S
6.9 r	43: 80	81	S
6.10 r	44: 10	11	All except K
7.1 r	49: 10	10	All
7.2 r	52: 40	40	K, S
7.3 r	53: 10	10	All
7.3 v	53: 20	21	Unknown

cont.

Folio	In the ms, verse no	Kufan equivalent	Comments
7.4 r	55: 20	20	K, S
	55: 30	30	K, S
7.4 v	55: 40	40	K, S
7.6 r	72: 10	10	All

a The siglae are those used by A. Spitaler, *Die Verszählung* (K = Kūfa, B = Baṣra, S = Shām, D = Damascus, H = Ḥims, M = Mecca, Md = Medina, etc.).

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